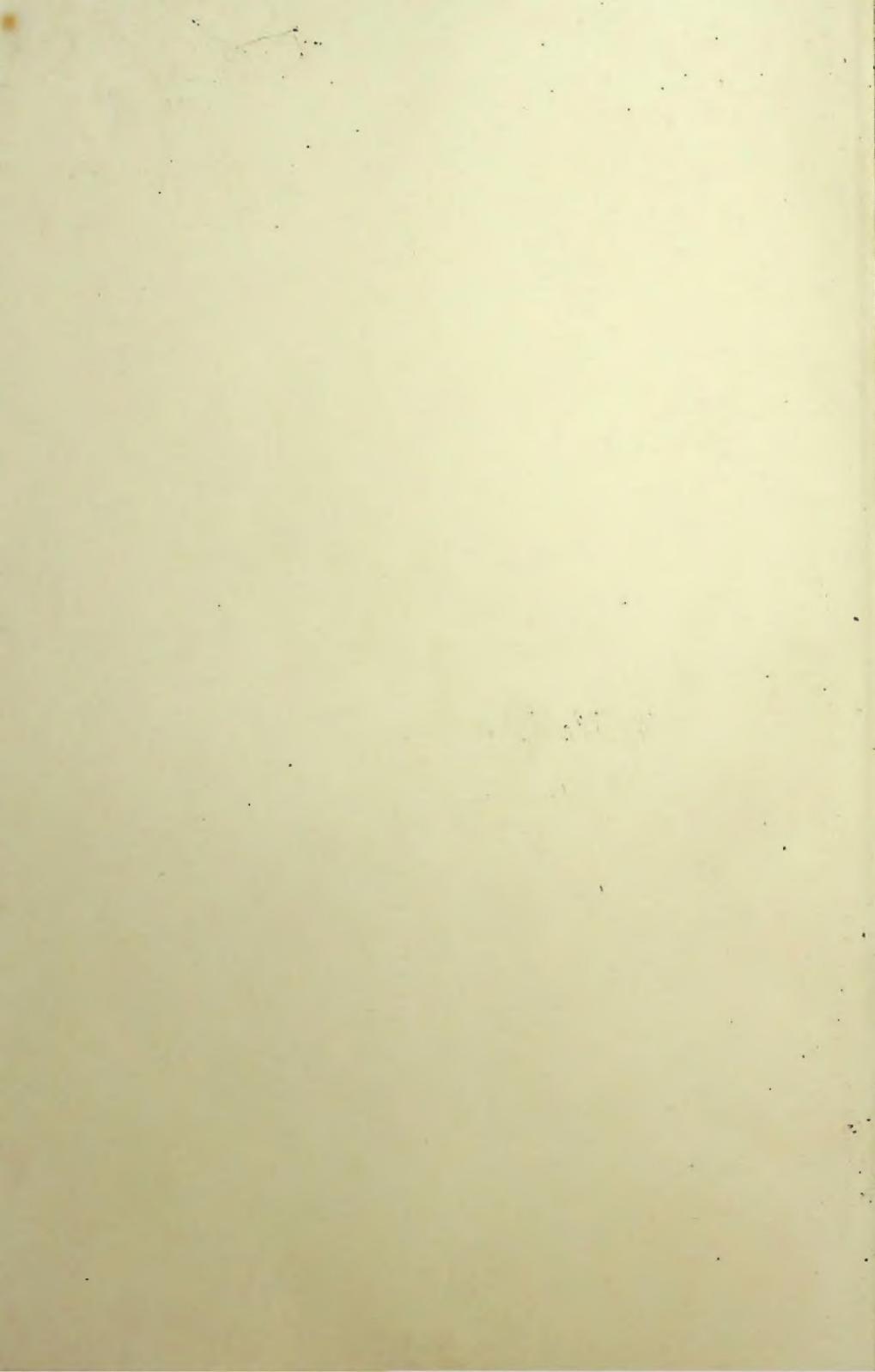


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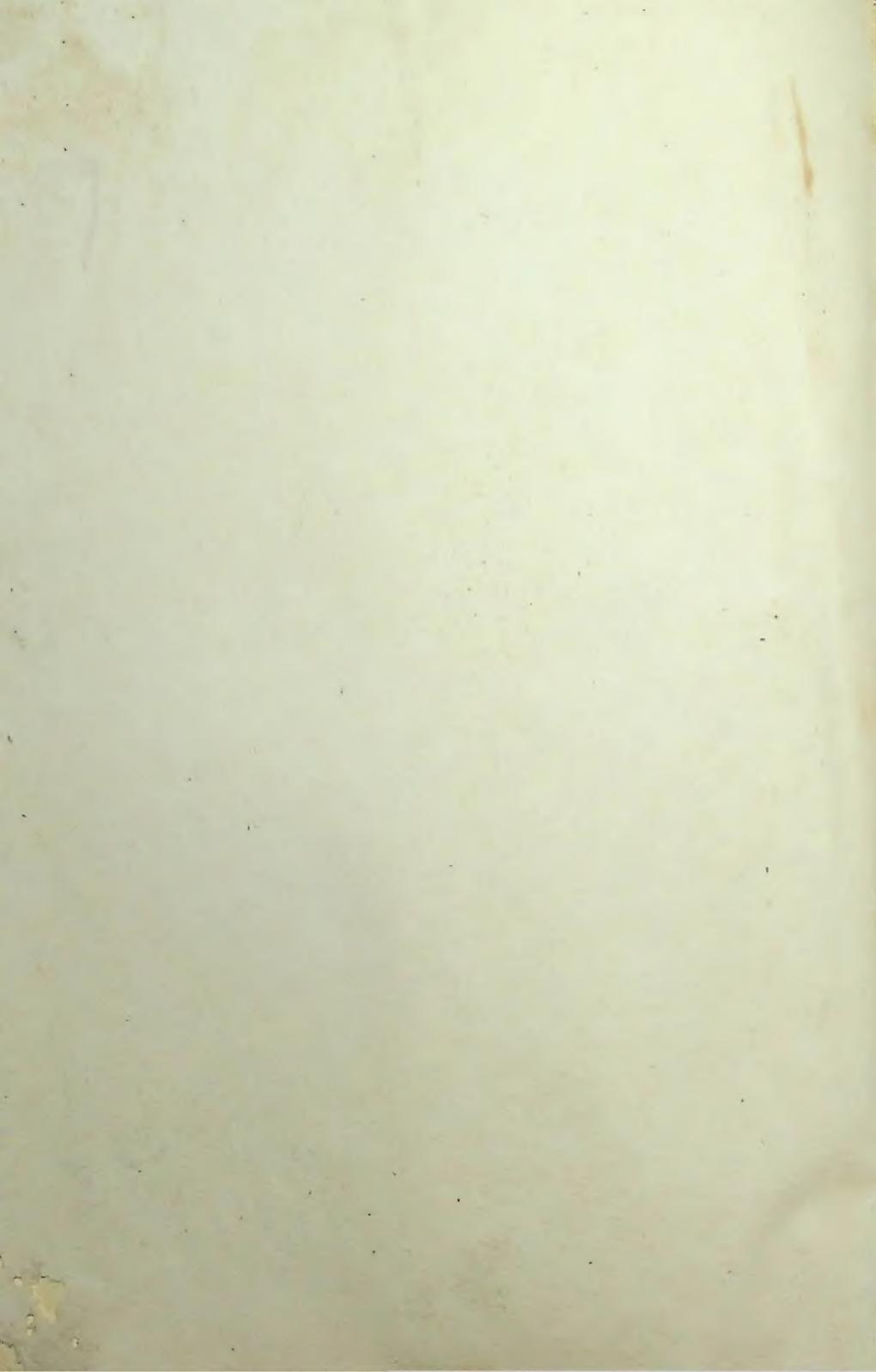
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Sufi - Rule (Guidance)
& The Ramakrishna Way
(A Comparative Study)

By
Ananda



SUB RULES OF THE
THE AMERICAN



Sufi - Ramakrishna Study Series VI

**SUFI RULES (GUIDANCE)
AND THE RAMAKRISHNA WAY**

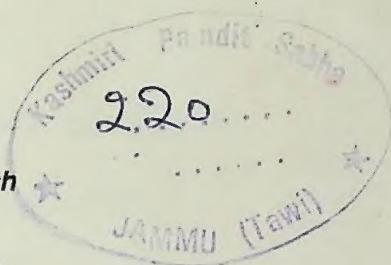
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Does a mother rush
to the child
to protect it,
or does the child
go to the mother?

O Illustrious Descendant
of the solar race,
pray, appear before me
on the mystery.

Does the cow
accompany the calf,
Do the crops go
to the cloud
to seek water?

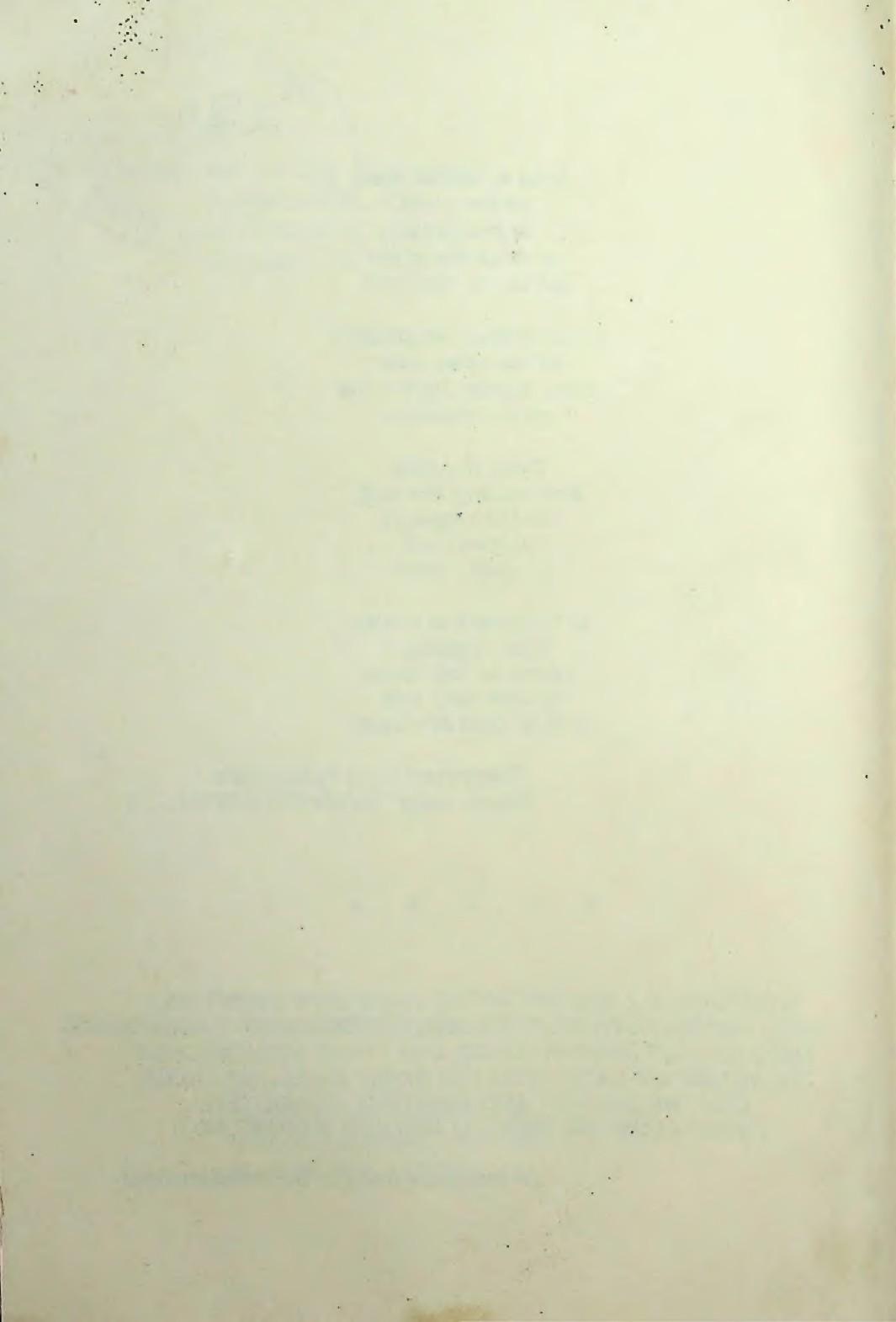
O Recipient of praise
from Tyagaraja !
come, let me know
whose duty it is
to take care of whom.

(Translated from Tyagaraja's
Telugu song 'TANAYUNI BROVA.....')

★ ★ ★ ★

O MOTHER, ALL IS DONE AFTER THINE OWN SWEET WILL
THOU ART IN TRUTH SELF-WILLED, REDEEMER OF MANKIND,
THOU ART THE MOVING FORCE AND I THEE MERE MACHINE
THE HOUSE AM I AND THOU THE SPIRIT DWELLING THERE,
I AM THE CHARIOT AND THOU THE CHARIOTEER
I MOVE ALONE AS THOU , O MOTHER, MOVEST ME I

(A favourite Song of Sri Ramakrishna)



SUFI – RAMAKRISHNA STUDY SERIES VI:

SUFI RULES (GUIDANCE) AND THE RAMAKRISHNA WAY

INTRODUCTION

Universality between the Hindu spiritual teachings (with special reference to the code of conduct as suggested by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda) and the Sufi Rules as put forth by the wise and devoted Darvesh is very much evident on a deep and extensive perusal of both the philosophies. However this does not mean in any way that both of them are identical with each other - dissimilarities do exist just as it is to be expected between any two persons, although both the systems of principles for conduct of life are mainly built on the foundation of love - love of God and love for the creation of God. 'Love' is the axle around which the wheel of life moves, love is the beginning and end of all life. But how this most powerful emotion is channalised through religion to attain the highest goal - God realisation forms the basis for these two biggest philosophies of the world. An attempt has been made here in this present treatise, to present both the similarities and dissimilarities of the two philosophies.

Dissimilarities between the two are rampant, like the views regarding the status of a person in the family or the life of a devotee/seeker. In the Hindu tradition once a person takes up sannyas he/she is expected to sever off all the relationships with his/her former life. For this purpose only the 'VIRAJA' Homa is performed by the aspirant and from which he/she is expected to emerge as a 'new born' - the love and respect commanded by the parents and family is now claimed by God, the Sangha and brother monks. The narrow and confined love for his family is widened to cover the whole humanity - there is nothing for him to claim as his own now - this is the 'freedom' he gains once he is accepted in the Sangha. Swami Vivekananda has called this as the 'breaking off the walls.' Whereas Sufi Rules do not demand this kind of severance of family life.

In fact it believes that by loving the family one is in a better position to love God and His creation:

Hindu philosophy is well known for its elasticity and this perhaps explains Sri Ramakrishna's desire to perform the last rites for his mother, although he was a sannyasin by that time. It is said that Sri Ramakrishna who loved his physical mother so intensely felt on her demise that the least he could do was to offer 'tarpan' to the departed soul. But* ...no sooner did he take up an Anjali of water than a state of spiritual inspiration came on him: his fingers became insensible and separated from one another and all the water fell out between the fingers, inspite of his repeated efforts to perform the rites..." (Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master, Page 354) That is why in the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, the concept of Sannyas is not so rigid or severe. It is though a formal process as described above - but the natural approach of the Sufis is also remarkably present in most of them.

Sufi-Rules presented here is just an at-random collection, divided into two parts - Part I and Part II. The matter presented is just sufficient to give us some broad outlook of the Sufi life in general and some knowledge of the Sufi Sadhana or practice. And an attempt has also been made to discuss the similarities and dissimilarities between the two philosophies.

About the first part let us refer to what has been said on the blurb of the Book 'KITAB ADAB AL-MURIDIN' (Sufi Rules for Novices, in its English translation by Menachem Milson, a Harvard University Publication, 1975) : "A manna of ethics, addressed to novices and to laymen, this work spells out in detail the ADAB or Rules of conduct : General rules on such matters as eating, companionship, hospitality and specific ones dealing with particular situations. The concluding section on ethical dispensations, permitted departures from the rules - bespeaks a realistic approach to social necessities and a recognition of human fallibility." Some parellel of this Part One can be found in the Smritis of the Hindus which are similar to those Sufi social principles and ethics leading to Dharma itself, rather preparing for Dharma one can say. And Hindu Dharma as one of the ancient dharmas has provided for both the Samasti and Vyasti aspects of life, that is to say, social life and conduct maturing into individual excellence or a perfection which is also known as 'Dharma'.

And Sri Ramakrishna as a prophet has spoken of and also illustrated in his life and teachings - on both sides of life. Hence I have attempted to highlight this parallelism between the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and the incidents from scriptures and everyday life with which they used to illustrate their views, and the Sufi Rules, since these rules happen to be very common and universally followed almost everywhere, in all life and religious practices.

For instance Sri Ramakrishna once talking to his devotees said: "You are leading a householder's life. Why should you be afraid of the world? When Rama said to Dasaratha that He was going to renounce the world, it worried His father and the king sought counsel of Vasishtha. Vasishtha said to Rama: 'Rama, why should you give up the world? Reason with me. Is this world outside God? What is there to renounce and what is there to accept? Nothing whatever exists but God. It is Brahman alone that appears as Isvara, maya, living beings and the universe.'"

The Second Part of the Sufi Rules that has been collated here is somewhat different and these are called FUTUWWAH and are mostly taken from the English translation of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami's Book 'The Book of Sufi Chivalry'. And it is said about this book that "Sulami's book of Sufi Chivalry" is such a teaching, synthesizing the unification of orthodox and mystical paths. This code of Sufi morals proposes to lead man to consciousness and perfection. It reveals the true meaning of compassion, love, friendship, generosity, self-denial, hospitality and the right actions associated with these virtues."

Whereas part One is the value part of it, part Two concerns the virtues of life in a way and actually the word 'FUTUWWAH' (rules, ordinances) is the way of the 'FATA' (novice, seeker). In Arabic 'FATA' literally means a handsome, brave youth: which is very much akin to the Upanishadic term 'SOUMYA' in sanskrit, of whom (such soumya persons) Sri Ramakrishna was so much enamoured of and no doubt he got ofcourse quite a few of such young handsome pure brave lads (like Narendra Dutta later Swami Vivekananda) to follow him and spread his message. It is similarly said by the Prophet (Chap. 3 of the Futuhat 1.97 Hadith) - "I have seen my Lord in the form of a beardless youth." It may be also that "After the enlightenment of Islam, following the use of the word in the Holy Koran 'fata' (plural : fityan) came to mean the ideal, noble and perfect man whose

hospitality and generosity would extend until he had nothing left for himself: a man who would give all, including his life, for the sake of his friends." Sri Ramakrishna himself was such an example who had given up everything for God and for the sake of a few godly noble youngmen who had chosen to follow him at Calcutta. Not only that, the Master used to keep everything including food brought by the devotees to these young men, he would give every bit of anything he got for them and their entertainment. His hospitality covered each and every one who were with him. Finally it is said that he told Narendra: "... today I have given you my all and have become a Fakir! Through this power you will do immense good to the world and then only you shall go back..."(LIFE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14, page 198)

Sri Ramakrishna loved these 'FATAS' - brave and handsome (pure) lads so much that it is said that he used to go on the roof of the building and cry out for them, for to him, they were all reflections of God. His love and emotions reached a high state either for God or for these lads to whom he used to keep good warm food and entertain them with songs and episodes from the scriptures. One is bound to wonder at this unique love he showered on them and also be amazed as to why these lads most of whom came from affluent families like Narendra Datta were coming all way to Dakshineswar to be with Sri Ramakrishna who could not even afford to offer them a mattress to sit upon, but whose love and concern for them was so deep that he would venture out inspite of his fragile health, just to see how they were living and the spiritual progress they were making:

It is reported that the same thing happened with Prophet Mohammed. Although such incidents are many let us atleast know one of them: "...Abu Bakr was not visible for a few days and did not appear at the mosque of the Prophet, the Prophet asked his whereabouts. The companions answered that Abu Bakr had distributed all his possessions and that he had nothing to wear except a piece of cloth, which he shared with his wife, each of them using it alternately to wrap themselves at the time of prayer." Having come to know these facts, the Prophet asked Bilal al-Habashi to go to the house of the Prophet's daughter Fatima and get a piece of cloth for Abu Bakr. Similar was the state of affairs in the early days of Ramakrishna Math at Baranagar in Calcutta. It is said that these

Soumyas of Sri Ramakrishna (the renunciates) did not have more than a few pieces of cloth amongst themselves and as such they used them sparingly mainly for going out to get alms. What renunciation and love for their Guru these Soumyas had!"

Coming back to Futuwwah, one can describe it as a high state of mind - "placing other people above oneself." At the same time "it is being generous and altruistic. It is self denial, immunity to disappointments, indulgence towards other peoples' shortcomings. It is a fearless stride against tyranny and above all, it is love. Love is the essence of Futuwwah, love of God, Love of His Creation, Love of Love." Sri Ramakrishna himself was one such example of love. And his love and anxiety about these young lads is very well and aptly put by a simple remark of the Prophet Mohammad, who said once: "I was a hidden treasure. I loved to be known, so I created man."

SO FUTUWWAH is an attempt to create an almost perfect man - not exactly in the image of a Father or God as in Christianity - but helping man to recreate himself in terms of Divinity which is already within him or her, that infinite potentiality of the soul which in Swami Vivekananda's own words: "Each Soul is potentially Divine." It is not just a creation out of nothing but is a kind of blossoming or blooming out in full glory which Sri Ramakrishna termed in his own veranacular (Bengali) as 'phota' or 'prasphutita' in sanskrit. The Master used to say: "As soon as flowers blossom bees come of themselves. They need not be invited. When love for and devotion to God becomes truly manifested in you, all those who have sacrificed their lives or have resolved to do so in quest of God, in other words, for the attainment of Truth cannot but come to you under the influence of an inexplicable spiritual Law."

By saying that "as soon as flowers blossom bees come of themselves", he meant that people will come to such a person whose heart had been flung open through the doors of love for one and all. Feast here in this context means the feasting of love/heart and hospitality meaning to keep oneself ready to serve each and every distressed (hungry) soul.

So it comes to say that the aim of Futuwwah: "was not to formulate an universal doctrine, but rather to inform the heart, taking into account the possibilities and short-comings of the disciples". Futuwwah is also connected with the brain (not only the heart), the supreme knowledge in

Islamic tradition. Because, after all it is the heart that bursts out the kind of love that knows no form. Such formless-love is like the formless-knowledge, beyond all the categories and boundaries, (like the sky in the pot mingling into the sky outside the pot) of this human body as described in the vedanta. And the Koran has described, "The Fata is he who breaks the idol, "idol here meaning" the idol of each man is his ego." Further, the wise sayings of these Masters as conveyed by Sulami and others implies: "Therefore, the true Futuwwah is nothing more, but nothing less also, than man's effective realization of his radical ontological indigence and, with the destruction of the illusory ego, the unveiling of that which is and always will be - the Unique Reality."

Another vital as well as interesting point to note in the meaning of the word 'FATA' is that it does not refer to 'he who seeks' but to 'he who is found'. It is like the mythological stone Parasmani which transfers everything that comes in contact with it, without getting itself transformed in any way and which is said to be very rarely found. The words 'found' and 'seek' are not so contradictory at all, judged from the ultimate standpoint. Yet 'seeking' does not mean 'finding' always that is true. A seeker of truth has to undergo great turmoil within himself as well as outside also. This is aptly called in the mystique language as the 'darkest night of the soul' in Christianity. So a 'FATA' has to not only to be heroic but be a hero who has passed through the Book of 'Nocturnal Voyage' called in Arabi as Kitab-al-iskon and the whole encounter takes place "at the source of ARIN". Now what is this 'ARIN'? - "In the traditional Islamic geography, ARIN designates an island or a mystical city, equi-distant from north and south and from east and west. It is obviously a symbolic denomination of the supreme spiritual centre or micro cosmically speaking of what is often represented in the sacred anthropology, as the 'heart'."

So 'FATA' is a kind of conversion, transformation like the coming out of the cloud -(a common saying among the Christian mystique) and Michel Chodkiewicz has explained it (in the Introduction of the 'BOOK OF SUFI CHIVALRY') "you are the cloud that veils your own Sun. Know the essential reality of your being." Further it has been explained that, "This encounter with the celestial Fata, which reveals to certain beings their permanent reality in divineness after they have 'broken the idol' can be understood as an anticipation of the paradisiac status of the Elect." And it

has been pointed out here that, "we should stress here the significant coherence between initiatic and eschatological symbolism."

The real aim to include part II is to "help the initiated people in their personal spiritual life, 'to inform the heart' and not just to formulate an universal doctrine..... taking into account the possibilities and (personal) shortcomings of their disciples." Disciples meaning here initiates and not converts or conversion. Conversion of course is the early phase of it. To be more percise, these intiates are those who have progressed considerably both spiritually and politically. This must be so, since it has been mentioned that, : "The Nasirian Futuwwah expressed the Caliph's grand design: for him, the re-conquest of the lost territories, the defence of the threatened borders and the re-establishment of the Caliphal authority lost to the unruly vassals were meaningless if not linked with a spiritual rectification to which the military caste had to be associated."

This is exactly like the two strata system prevailing amongst the Hindus, the Brahmin and the Khatriya class coming together in a synthesis of culture and religion in India. The Khatriyas were like the Islamic Caliphates being politically powerful whereas the Sufi-mystics were the Brahmins more or less interested in the exercise of spiritual power and being somewhat more organised in an orderly manner and thereby being more concerned about one's own self than the outside world. Their's was a subjective approach, rather of the same mystique type that is found all over in the same manner. Similar was this combination " whence the birth, under at Nasir's patronage, of an intiatic, organised order (like the sampradayas or sects) which borrowed Sufi doctrines and methods and linked its initiatic chain (Silsila) to the Sufi Masters, but possessed its own character such as the ritualised practice of hunting and martial arts." This stage of development of the order can be compared historically with our own (Indian) Naga-Sampradaya, which was also martially organised and infact these Nagas were as mercenaries to fight in many a feudal, social and political battles. It is interesting to note that all these happened during the early mediaeval period, almost at the same period when Caliph al-Nasir al-Din Allah ascended to the throne in 1180, when, "Islam was weakened by internal strife, harassed on all its orders, and on the brink of formidable disturbances." At that time Genghis Khan who invaded India later was just thirteen years old. Crusades (i.e. fights and confrontation

between Islam and Christianity) had already started and the Christian powers were mobilized later. There also existed a military order belonging to the Church which actively participated in the Crusade wars.

The internal strife existing in the Islamic power lobby was no less than what existed amongst the Hindus of that period. For we are told that, "As the storm was gathering on its borders, the Caliphate was dying. The Seljuk Turks, contesting the Caliph's power, had undermined the strength of the Institution. Independent dynasties were created in Asia Minor, Syria and Iran. In Egypt, the Fatimid anticaliphate had disappeared, Ayyubids remained an autonomous power." Recognising the seriousness of the situation, both politically and militarily, Nasir prepared himself to organise various spiritual powers through a Futtuwah so that a consolidated front consisting of small territories, spiritual sects and individuals can be created to withstand the onslaught of history. The social and historical reaction to this is very interesting sociologically, atleast, since it lead to the institution of 'amanah' (sacred trust) being made more organised and effective before the complete disintegration of 'Ummah' (community of the Faithful). No better was the political situation in Hindusthan during the medieval period, when excepting strife nothing flourished in a big way, however there was plenty of small sects, who with their regional and personal approach were able to keep on the dynamics of the society still moving instead of a complete collapse. So life continued with the passing of time and history as Swami Vivekananda has aptly commented: life oscillated between the integration and disintegration, collective growth and organisation of the body versus individual and personal development of the holy spirit, Samashti and Vyasti, almost in the same manner as the 'yang' and the 'yin' in the Chinese language.

How true is the saying that the society moves in a half-circle like a pendulum: When political powers shoot up, kings and leaders raise to great heights, similarly when spiritual power dominates the individual and society, the Gurus or the masters have a field-day as well as fair-play. So also there is always some synthesis arrived at also occasionally everywhere. Once Swami Vivekananda asserted that: "The power that can transform life in a moment can be found only in the living illuminated souls, those shining lights who appear among us from time to time" (Gurus). So also during the time of Nasir and also thereafter for "Multiple

sources document the hierarchy of ranks (which was not there, atleast not supposed to be in the freedom loving individualistic Sufi-life): the rituals that gave access to each rank (in which an important role was given to even the symbolic beverage the cup of salted water, as well as to the investiture of the novice with a belt comparable in function to the khirquah, the cloak or robe of the Sufis; the code of ethics emphasizing honour, generosity and bravery; and the esoteric meaning of this 'aristocratic' or courtly Futuwwah."

Apart from this aristocratic, formal and courtly Futuwwah, there existed another more popular one about which it is said that "this popular Futuwwah is both distract from Sufism and symbiotically related to it." Also "like Sufism, it possesses an essentially spiritual finality to which are subordinated, atleast in principle, more visible activities, be they economic, social or political."

So it can be surmised that there are two types of Futuwwah or Rules, one is of general type and the other a special type, the former being of easier type is popular and folk type in character whereas the special type is the traditional as well as institutional in nature and can be safely said to be the institutional aspect of the Futuwwah. Sufism combines both the types. In the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna also these two features are very conspicuous. It is possible that only with the combination of these two types most of the religious movements grow-up and mature. At the same time when these rules or Futuwwah become too general, popular and somewhat slackened in intensity, although the spirit of the movement may spread far and wide, there is the inherent danger of its getting dissipated also.

That may be the reason as to why it is said some kind of institutionalism guided and consolidated by the life and teachings of some genuine masters is very essential for the growth and spread of any movement, specially religious: as such we find the word 'FATA' appearing frequently in the sacred Koran. In fact the meditation of the people on Futuwwah (ahl al- Futuwwah) has always been most popularly centered on the occurrence of this word in the verse 60 of Chapter 21 (Swrah al-Anbiya, the Prophets). So one can presume that this 'FATA' follows a Guru Parampara and finds a good semblance for the usefulness of these Futuwwah, for Fatas in Sri Ramakrishna's illustration regarded the safety

of taking a bath in ghats where there are steps. He says that if people took care to bathe on the steps there is no risk or danger of their being suddenly sucked into the deep waters of the river or being carried away due to the swirls and whirls of the currents into the depth of the river. So these rules in part II are like the 'steps' - the path properly mapped and made ready by the Masters which leads the novices "along the path that leads to this end (realization of the unique Reality), the Fata must learn not to love his ego and that is why, in the course of his novitiate, the Sheikh teaches him to love others before himself and God above all." Sri Ramakrishna named two kinds of 'egos'. The unripe and ripe ego. The unripe ego makes one feel 'I am the doer, I am the son of a wealthy man, I am rich, I am learned. How dares anyone slight me' whereas the ripe ego, when a man may keep this ego even after attaining samadhi, such a man feels either that he is a servant of God or that he is a lover of God like Sankaracharya who retained the 'Knowledge-ego' to teach others. "But once the goal has been attained, he discovers that the secret of his apprenticeship is that he has no ego, and what he loved was but a dream. The idol has reverted to nothingness: both 'self' and 'others' cease to exist." This aspect of the Sufi rules to attain the realization of the self is somewhat like the popular version of Vedanta. Because the actual Vedanta (Advaita in its purest form) does not accept anything other than the 'self' which can neither be in ephemeral state nor be in a changeful state but can only be an eternal-existence inherent in itself. It is rather a pure state of the 'ego' itself, neither 'ripe' or 'un-ripe' but by itself which is realized or not is the only truth.

However, the Part II of the Rules or Futuwwah is mostly the experiences of the masters who experienced the Truth and are supported by realized souls and these are called 'ISNAD'. Sulami who merely collected these rules to be on the safe side uses very vague language like "so-and-so informed us on the authority of so-and-so", sometimes this vagueness of the origin stretches up to the names of seven or eight transmitters. But "towards the end of the book, the 'ISNAD' is reduced to one or two transmitters and Sulami uses the phrase, 'ma quala wa quala' (he said and so and so said) or sometime "wa sami 'tu' (I heard so-an-so say". Nearly seventy seven names and their sayings have thus been recorded in most of these Futuwwah mentioned in Part II.

Obviously most of these are very similar to the ShrutiS that were heard and then memorised and then thought upon. For instance, even in the Sufi process of cogitation one comes across the same three distinct levels of knowledge as found in the Shurtis namely (1) SRAVANA (2) MANANA and (3) NIDIDHYASANA which according to Sufis correspond to (1) ilm al-yaquin (knowledge through information) (2) ayan al-yaquin (knowledge through experience) and (3) this is the highest haq al-yaquin (True knowledge of the being.)

Finally, "the rules of conduct and virtues presented in the 'BOOK OF SUFI-CHIVALRY' illuminates the way to the total assimilation of Sufism by experiencing and living it". Here the word 'living' assumes great importance since only by living, not by hearing only or even seeing - but being, transforming oneself into a perfect being (through 'adab' to start with, then to be followed with constant remembrance and finally through continuous acts of devotion to God.)



Part I

Elsewhere we have discussed in detail matters relating to the ascetic and mystic aspects in SUFISM, the two very important characteristics to be noticed in this movement. However according to Milson, "asceticism as such, is not to be confused with Sufism", although "the connection between the two can hardly be doubted." While Islam in general does not have any such interest either in asceticism or mysticism, "Sufi masters always count the early ascetics as their precursors and mentors." For "Sufi doctrine, expounded it in its mature form in the 4th and 5th centuries A.H. (6th century A.D.) considers 'Zuhd' to be one of the primary stages or, to use Sufi terminology, 'station' (MAQUAMAT) along the way which every mystic should traverse." (Indroduction: A SUFI RULES FOR NOVICES).

How is it then that these two characteristics namely (1) Asceticism and (2) Mysticism can go so well and parallel with Islam? To answer this question we have to refer to the other "two characteristics of Sufism which made it possible for its adherents to avoid 'schism' between themselves and non-mystical traditional Islam and to attract a large following". The two characteristics are: "(1) The first is the Sufi insistence on the observance of the Law: no one could aspire to attain the 'HAQIQA' who did not observe the SHARIA, and no Sufi, no matter how elevated his spiritual station, could be exempt from the Law of Obligations of the Sharia." Hinduism also tried in a similar fashion to impose some social-laws (SMRITIS etc) but in vain since the approach was somewhat negative in nature. Unfortunately imposition of such rules amongst the Hindus resulted only in fragmentation and division of the society. Whereas amongst the Muslims, since the imposition of the Laws was more positive and as such resulted in an Unity based on a minimum number of clear-cut principles and with the intention of preventing further divisions and un-necessary in-fighting in society. No doubt Sankaracharya did some consolidation work, but since his philosophy was of a very high order understood only by the upper strata of society and since he never tried to galvanize the lower strata of society in any way it did not bring forth the expected results. The loose strings of the religion and philosophy of the Hindus remained loose without anybody knitting them into an effective whole. Since the Sufis were effectively brought under some general control of Islam and as this 'control' went on

tightening its grip gradually and with determination it was possible to re-intergrate Sufism almost completely and successfully.

Now regarding the second characteristic which prevented schism Milson says: (2) "Another characteristic is the abstruse, esoteric nature of the Sufi sayings. Couched in a vocabulary derived from the Quran, and other traditional sources, Sufi Pronouncements could be interpreted at different levels. The mystical doctrine was to be taught only to the initiate and only according to the degree of preparedness, it was not to be divulged to the vulgar." Although the above observation is very significant by itself it does not present the complete truth of the factual history of Sufi literature. No doubt Sufi literature was expected to be more relevant and cohesive, but what happened was that due to many reasons besides the influence of heretic elements its growth became haphazard and resulted in a hybrid product. Besides the constant attack by the general Islamic bodies which were allergic to the ascetic and mystic puritanism of Sufi literature did untold harm to its growth and spread. No doubt the random growth of Sufi literature made possible by the contribution of each and everybody who counted led to its great popularity but unfortunately at the cost of its purity. One can even dare to say that it was mainly because of this vast popularity without any restraint of its literature at that period which lowered the level of Sufi literature from its high and divine status to an adventurous romantic cult where everything was taken in an easy and permissive hedonistic manner. Because of its present common everyday folk style and character, the former strict and revered views on soul and the importance given to the purity of life was no where to be found. This was in stark contrast to the real Sufi-tradition which was meant to be a well preserved corpus that 'included an elaborate technical vocabulary, a list of eminent mystics who were recognised as the founders and authoritative masters of Sufism, a large stock of hagiographic material, and a common theory of the mystical way (TARIQUA).

For example, "Earlier Sufis used the term 'mutashabbihun' perjuratively to signify 'those who pretend to be Sufis'. "So from this it is very clear that a kind of pretension did exist from the beginning, atleast there was sufficient apprehension of mix-ups and compromises. Slowly, this concept of lay-brotherhood gained strength and started controlling even the few puritanic elements that still managed to exist . Mohabba, the

love for Sufism and those who were possessed with a kind of uncompromising God-love were slowly but surely turning towards a sort of 'social-love' as practised in a brotherhood. Naturally this meant many short-cuts and compromises in the place of the orginal puritanical Sufi life-style. The correct and real emphasis of Sufism on 'God-love' - love of God only now shifted to love of the brotherhood, which from any standard cannot be justified, however much it might have proved useful in the spreading of Sufism. Whatever this consolidation in Sufi life and Sufi literature this love of brotherhood might have brought, it cannot be denied also this was only an external gratification to cover-up the recession and the gaps of the inward journey.

One thing we find of interest is that these 'Rules for the Novice' (KITAB-ADAB-al-MURIDIN) which concerns mostly Sufi-life and conduct (from 7th to 11th Century A.H.) being transcribed in whole or in parts to various languages all over the Muslim world, from India to Tunisia, Damascus, Jerusalem and Cairo. It is: 'primarily meant for novices and it presents in fact an ethical doctrine for Sufis in general.' According to Milson: "Although the application of lay-members to Sufism was a phenomenon both very common and of great importance to Sufi orders, this subject is hardly discussed in the Sufi manual." Interestingly this feature of participation of lay-members is prominently noticeable in the Ramakrishna movement and its rules framed by its great founder Swami Vivekananda. He wanted the lay-members to play an independently prominent and significant part in the running of the institution and as such he did not bring the Mission part of the organisation under any set rules and regulations, infact he did not even leave any manuals etc. covering any aspect of the life and activities or even the relationship with the movement. In contrast for the monastics and dedicates at least he left a skeletal framework of rules, however insufficient they might have been.

Just as Swami Vivekananda perhaps thought that rules have exceptions too similarly we find this Kitab-Adab-al-Muridin presenting several exceptions popularly known as 'RUKHSA' and these became the source of controversy in later period. For 'It seems that certain Sufis or would-be Sufis availed themselves of the concept of 'Ruksha' and applied it in a rather arbitrary way. Some leading Sufis were therefore moved to voice their opposition to such a practice and thereby to safeguard the

orthodoxy of Sufism and its moral reputation. " Further we also come to know that, "Even though the author designates the 'Rukhas' as suitable only for lay-members, it seems that most of these 'relaxations of the strict rules' reflect customs and practices which were common among regular Sufis as well," observed Milson in his book 'Introduction/A Sufi Rule for Novices'.

Since it will not be possible to go through the whole gamut of these Rules in this short article we have to content ourselves by dealing with some important view-points of similarity and dis-similarity between Sufism and the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. It is also said that "No one can properly know the way of the Sufis until he knows their fundamental beliefs, their rules of conduct ('adab'/ethics/rules of conduct) and their technical terms." Further, the necessity arises to atleast know some of the major rules "because of the great number of false pretenders, the state of the true Sufis has been ignored. However the corruption of the former should not impugn the thought."

So let us begin with Part I, Rule 3 which says:"God (Allah) is one, having no partner, no rival, no equal. He is described by the terms in which He described Himself..... His reality cannot be truly expressed, and sight cannot perceive HIM. Everything said in relation is only supposition. We do not say His being (Kwanuhu-'Kawn' is the Arabic equivalent of the philosophical term 'generation') but rather 'His existence' (Wujuduhu), because not every existence (mawjid) is a (generated) being (Kain) but every generated being is existent... He existed before time: His essence is concealed from description: and He is beyond place. The cause of everything is His creation, but there is no cause to HIS creation. HIS essence (Dhat) is not like other essences and HIS attributes (Sifat) are not like other attributes."

How similar is this proclamation to the Vishista-Advaita philosophy of 'Bhakti' and its 'Vishesha' and 'Ashesha' concepts! What is significant about this is the Lila-Prakriti of the God without any space-time-causation factors and last but not the least its different approach altogether to the immanent sense of existence and the 'being' character of the reality or God which is not given any such primary importance at all. Existence as an immanent character is foremost in all the schools of theology. As against the personal God, the 'being' aspect of its

reality has been given rather an auxiliary position only in all the Bhakti Schools, including the Sufi.

Further to support its theology aspect more strongly, the personal aspect of God has also been given some priority by the Sufi Rules, for in Part I, Rule 4 it is declared: "All that is mentioned in the Quran and the Hadith concerning the Face, the Hand, the Soul, the Hearing and the Sight of God is affirmed. The doctrine of the Sufis concerning 'God sitting on the throne' is in conformity with the dictum of Malik-b-Anas on this matter, that belief in it is obligatory. Such is also the doctrine on the descent of God." And "The possibility of the beatific vision (Ruyat Allah) in paradise by eyesight is affirmed. (Hadith is quoted to prove this)" says Rule 6: This image of God as the all-powerful King sitting on a golden throne somewhere high-up in the heavens dispensing justice has been studied differently in political science and sociology and many have commented on it. This idea of heaven or paradise with eternal happiness also gives us some clue into the depths of human psychology.

All these are very similar to the Pouranic and Bhakti-School oriented concepts and thoughts. Sri Ramakrishna has also said that God cannot be described in any such exhaustive manner and no philosophy or scriptures can hope to do that however much deep and full their contents may be. He too emphasized the 'existent' or the manifest of 'the divine', but possibly without denying the 'being' character of the same. Thus his view bears very good semblance to Rule 3 specially. Since in the Indian tradition, specially in the Hindu religion, ultimately there is not much of contradiction between the 'Being' and the 'Becoming'. No doubt some slight differences do exist as in the Bhakti philosophy which has accepted the priority and the pure character of 'Being' as against the qualitites which leads to its 'Becoming' ultimately. Logically this primacy is more consistent in philosophy than in the theological interpretation however cogent it might be in its existential super-structure. The fact that is to be recognised is that the essence must not be lost sight of in the existence but to face this fact and also to accept is not that easy indeed. Since faith in a way is more concrete and effective, may be it alone can face the dilemma and overcome it to a great extent as many religions of the world have done in the past.

Sri Ramakrishna being a man of faith primarily, had not only accepted all such beliefs about God but had also very often asserted that God can be seen like any other objects in existence by us and also can be heard but here he put forth a very vital and effective condition/qualification that the one who desired to see god must "practise spiritual discipline; they should pray eagerly to god in solitude: God cannot be realized through scholarship" and God cannot be seen "with these eyes. God gives one divine eyes and only then can one behold HIM" (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 183). Master's reference to the 'divine eye' is akin to that of a microscope through which many things can be observed, which an ordinary eye cannot do. May be he meant by divine eye the intuition - an intuitive eye - the eye of an yogic detachment, purity and love and not these physical eyes full of desires and passions. May be this is the reason also why the Sufis say - that the real 'eye' is not the eye as an organ - but the heart which can see, love and realise God.

It is also true that a heart without any or sufficient love of God fails to see God. Otherwise God in all His glory can be seen everywhere and in everything when one's heart is opened wide for HIM and there is real earnest seeking within to see HIM. It is in a way, a purely psychological and spiritual vision of God appearing as any other thing to this world, may be in human form, sacred animals or trees etc. but always in a much bigger, stronger and magnificent manner mostly due to our strong primordial sense and a deep perpetual and cultural belief in 'GOD' from the beginning of human-life and society. Every one of us wants our God to be more powerful, strong and handsome than ourselves. He has to be omnipotent and omniscient. Rightly Swami Vivekananda said that for a ordinary domestic cat, a huge strong Tomcat is God.

According to Sri Ramakrishna: "It is God alone who has become everything. But in man HE manifests HIMSELF the most. God is directly present in the man who has the pure heart of a child and who laughs and cries and dances and sings in divine ecstasy". (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page 208) Realising the various obstacles and difficulties in the path of a modern man in realising God he said:"For the Kaliyug the path of Bhakti is especially good. One can realize God through bhakti too. As long as one is conscious of the body, one is also conscious of the objects. It is

extremely difficult to get rid of the consciousness of objects. And one cannot realize 'I am HE' as long as one is aware of objects."

While such statements are sound psychologically, they also enable one to understand the anthropocentricity of the human and personal form of God and HIS manifestations. Similar is the belief pattern that God incarnates or sends HIS messengers or prophets in the form of human beings to guide the populace. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "One can see God. One can see both aspects of God - God with form and without form. One can see God with form, the Embodiment of Spirit. Again, God can be directly perceived in a man with a tangible form. Seeing an Incarnation of God is the same as seeing God Himself. God is born on earth as man in every age." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 186)

Coming back to the Sufi rules, Rule 8 of Part I states: "God creates the actions of man as HE creates men themselves. Also, Polytheism and dis-obedience occur by the judgement and pre-destination of God. Prayer is permitted behind any iman, pious or impious." This Sufi Rule brings back to memory the saying of Sri Ramakrishna when he says: "In this creation of God there is variety of things: men, animals, trees, plants etc. Among the animals some are good, some bad. There are ferocious animals like tiger. Some trees bear fruit sweet as nectar and others bear fruit that is poisonous. Likewise among human beings, there are the good and the wicked, the holy and the unholy. There are some devoted to God and others who are attached to the world" etc. (Ibid,page 86) Clarifying the point further he says: "In HIS maya there exists avidya as well as vidya. Darkness is needed too. It reveals all the more the glory of light. There is no doubt that anger, lust and greed are evils. Why, then, has God created them? In order to create saints. A man becomes a saint by conquering the senses. Is there anything impossible for a man who has subdued his passions? He can even realize God, through HIS Grace. Again, see how HIS whole play of creation is perpetuated through lust." (Ibid page 97)

It is interesting to note that in Sufi and Ramakrishna type of thinking God being the 'Whole' (PURNA) - in the fullness of everything, good and bad all are His creation only. This is in contrast to some bhakti schools who altogether deny the creation of anything bad or evil by God. According to them God cannot and will not create such things. Bhakti theology does not accept imputation of anything bad or evil upon God.

Majority of these Bhakti groups accept Satan only as a parallel force and to be the best media of such evils and sufferings of the fallen-men and women and God does not have anything to do with them. The satanic 'Mithya' or illusion according to the Indian (Hindu) view is due to the 'Karma'. Man suffers his/her own Karma. According to Hindu point of view: "Everything is under the control of Prakriti. Nobody can escape the fruits of past action. This is called Prarabdha." (Ibid. Page 951) However according to Sri Ramakrishna: ".....God himself has become all this – the universe, maya and the living beings.....A vilwa-fruit, for instance, includes flesh, seeds and shell. You get the flesh by discarding the shell and seeds. But if you want to know the weight of the fruit, you cannot find it if you discard the shell and seeds. Just so, one should attain Satchidananda by negating the universe and its living beings. But after the attainment of Satchidananda one finds that Satchidananda Itself has become the universe and the living beings. It is of one substance that the flesh and the shell and seeds are made, just like butter and buttermilk." (Ibid. Page 395) There is some strong reason or logic also behind such an outlook.

According to Rule 13 of Part I, which stresses on faith or belief and declares: "Complete faith (Iman) consists of confirmation by the tongue, belief with the heart and the performance of the basic duties of Islam (al-arkan). He who does not fulfill the first requirement is an unbeliever (KAFIR); he who does not fulfill the second is hypocrite (munafiq); he who abandons practice (prayer/sadhana) is a sinner (Fasiq) and whoever does not follow the custom of the prophet is an innovator (mubtadi)-may be in the heretic sense perhaps." This outlook resembles the KARMA view of Hindus which also generally stresses on the belief of faith factor on three grounds: (1) 'KAYA' -physical action, (2) 'MANA' - the mind and (3) in words or 'VAKYA' or tongue. This trinity of 'KAYA-MANA-VAKYA' occupies a grand position in Hindu philosophy. One of the favourite sayings of Sri Ramakrishna was "to become one with the mouth (words) and the mind" and "not to allow any burglary (hypocrisy)" in the treasure-house of the Bhavas (ideals,belief,faith and conviction)".

Instead of advising one to choose a life of complete poverty, Sufi Rule 16/17 of Part I advocates a middle path by telling that: "Poverty is better than riches. Gabriel advised the prophet not to accept the treasures

of the earth" yet at the same time warns that "...poverty is not identical with Sufism (tasawwuf): rather, completion of the former stage is the beginning of the latter, "meaning thereby that it is not an end in itself. However this statement seems somewhat strange since it is said that Sufis, atleast in the earlier stages stressed very much on 'poverty' and austerity. May be later it was compromised. The Rule 17, describing a true devout Sufi states: "The Sufi is different from a Malamati, for the Malamati is one who would not demonstrate a good work nor conceal a bad one, whereas the Sufi does not concern himself at all with opinion that other people have of him." This type of Sufi resembles Swami Vivekananda for during a conversation Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra (later Swami Vivekananda): "How do you feel about worldly people who say all kinds of things about the spiritually minded. But look here. When an elephant moves along the street, any number of curs and other small animals may bark and cry after it, but the elephant doesn't even look back at them. If people speak ill of you, what will you think of them?" Narendra: "I shall think that dogs are barking at me." (Ibid page 84) A true Sufi would prefer moving in this world, without much caring for anybody's remarks or opinions "like the elephant that moves in the market place howled at by hundreds of dogs".

In the ethics of financial matters Sufi Rule 15 for the novices states:"It is permitted to occupy oneself in commerce and crafts. The lowest way of earning one's livelihood is in begging", but in Rule 18 we find the opposite being advocated:" It is preferable not to be occupied with commerce and crafts but rather to devote oneself to acts of piety: this rule is applicable to such who having complete trust in God's providence are not concerned with worldly matters." Gita also tells that "He who is exclusive and selfcentered in the procurement of food and in the partaking of it, is a sinful man. What he eats is nothing but sin. The bondage of sin that he creates for himself is boundless " (Chap.3,sloka 13) Even Swami Vivekananda stressed on the economic self-sufficiency of the monasteries than depending upon the donations and begging and his ideas were similar to some of programmes of the Christian monasteries followed since 12th century. The followers of Sri Ramakrishna have been asked to follow the middle-path and not to go by any extreme-end. The Master used to advise his devotees: " It is permissible to (earn money) to maintain a

religious family. You may try to increase your income but in an honest way. The goal of life is not harmful if it is devoted to the service of God. Money is not harmful if it is devoted to the service of God."

Sufi Rules also made provision for some exceptions like in all other religions for Rule 167/168 in Part IV says: "It is allowed by way of 'rukhsa' to posses an estate or to rely on a regular income. Their rule in this matter is that one should not use all of it for himself, but should dedicate this to public charities and should take from it only enough for one year for himself and his family, following the example of the Prophet." Further Rule 168 says: "There is a 'rukhsa' allowing one to be occupied in business; this dispensation is granted to him who has to support a family. But this should not keep him away from the regular performance of prayers. He should not consider this activity as a means of earning his livelihood but as a way of helping other Muslims. He should try to limit his business hours to the period between the morning prayer and the noon prayer, so that he can pray all five daily prayers with his companions. If he gains more than he needs for his family, he should give it to the members of his brotherhood (ahl suhbatih)."

Sri Ramakrishna was always for the middle path for when a Brahmo devotee asked him: "Sir, can't we realize God without complete renunciation?" he replied with a smile: "Of course you can: Why should you renounce everything? You are all right as you are, following the middle path - like molasses partly solid and partly liquid.....I tell you the truth; there is nothing wrong in your being in the world. But you must direct your mind towards God: otherwise you will not succeed. Do your duty with one hand and with the other hold to God. After the duty is over, you will hold on to God with both hands." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page 138)

This present stress in Sufi rules on community and brotherhood seems to be of later origin since originally Sufism in particular began its journey by giving more importance to individual life and individual needs than to the community and brotherhood. More than service to the community, surrender to God and love of God was the original foundation of Sufism. From the nature of these rules, it looks they were framed at a later date since this 'community sense' goes very well in general with the spirit of Islam.

Inspite of this, Rule 111 claims that "There is unanimous argument that the messengers are more excellent than angels (though Kalabadi, the Sufi saint and philosopher says that it cannot be determined whether the prophets are superior to the angels or vice versa) but these variances as to the order of priority between men and angels" This importance given to the messenger over an angel is naturally due to the fact that a messenger serves a greater spiritual purpose and goal for the benefit of the community and not to his own individual self. According to Sri Ramakrishna, the messengers are like the big floats to timber which are capable of carrying large number of men and animals; "a huge timber floats on the water and can carry animals as well. But a piece of worthless wood sinks, if a man sits on it and drowns him. Therefore in every age God incarnates Himself as the guru, to teach humanity. Satchidananda alone is the Guru." (Ibid.page 98)

Stressing the need for rules and regulations in spiritual life, atleast at the primary stage Sufi Rule 21 declares: "Observance of the laws is necessary. God may remove the sense of burden arising from the legal duty from him whose heart becomes pure but not the obligations themselves, because the human qualities do not cease in anyone." In this context we can recall a favourite song of Sri Ramakrishna which claimed that when one gets into that height of love and purity of dedication for the sake of the Divine - where does any obligation remain at all for such a devotee to follow the rituals of Sandhya, Gayatri or even prayer. Here at this stage everything gets merged in the object itself, including the discharge of rules and convention. The song runs as follows:-

What need is there of penance if God is worshipped with love?
What is the use of penance if God is not worshipped with love:
What need is there of penance if God is seen within and without?
What is the use of penance if God is not seen within and without?
O Brahman: O my child: Cease from practising further penances
Hasten to Sankara, the Ocean of Heavenly Wisdom, Obtain from
HIM the love of God, the pure love praised by devotees,
Which scraps in twain the shackles that bind you to the world.

(Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Page 389)

At the same time Sri Ramakrishna has also warned that :" At the beginning of spiritual life the devotee should observe such rites as pilgrimage, putting a strip of beads around his neck and so forth. But outward ceremonies gradually drop off as he attains the goal, the vision of God...Orthodox Vaishnavas insist on the outer insignia of religion...." (Ibid page 305).

Similar in thought Sri Ramakrishna used to say like the Sufis and quoting from the ancient belief in the Hindu tradition and Scriptures that "...some souls realize God without practising any spiritual discipline. They are called nityasiddha, eternally perfect. Those who have realized God through austerity, japa and the like are called sadhanasiddha, spiritual discipline. Again there are those called kripasiddha, perfect through divine grace. These last may be compared to a room kept dark a thousand years, which becomes lighted the moment a lamp is brought in ..." (Ibid page 483)

Sufi Rule 21 deals with such people and says:"Some classes of men are freed in various degrees from human weaknesses; these are in declining order; SIDDIQUIN (SAINTS/SIDDHAS). ARIFAN (Knowers or Sufis who have achieved the esoteric knowledge), MURDIN (NOVICES)." Similiarly in Hindu tradition and philosophy novices must observe the laws, novices who are known as Pravartakas or probationers have to obey certain regulations is the real idea of this Rule 21.

Talking about human emotions of love and hate Sufi rule 22 declares:" Love for the sake of God (al-huble fi allah) and hate for the sake of God (al-bughd fi allah) are amongst the firmest ties of the Faith." The word ' Fi allah' seems to indicate that any social relations should be motivated not by wordly considerations but by religious motives. This is clear since the rule further says: "It is obligatory, within the limits of capability, to command the good and forbid evil (al-amr bil-ma' ruf walnahy 'an al-munk). There is historical and social evidence to prove that much happens because of this 'hate for the sake of God'. Communities living together hate each other because the gods they worship are different; not that much happens because of 'love fot the sake of God' -at the most there may be a sense of comradeship but no fire of hatred, jealousy and anguish is ignited. This love/hate relationship is generally prominent in most of the devotional type of religions. Further this experience of hate for the sake of God is specially conspicuous in most of the semetic-religious groups

and sects. Sri Ramakrishna himself experienced this 'hate' syndrome in a way during the short spell of his Sufi Sadhana. In his own words:"I then repeated the holy syllable 'ALLAH' with great devotion, wore cloth like the Muslims, said Narnaz thrice daily and felt disinclined even to see Hindu deities not to speak of saluting them, inasmuch as the Hindu mode of thought vanished altogether from my mind...." (SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE GREAT MASTER, page 299)-

May be for the novice, in the beginning certain amount of protection and negativism is very useful for the consolidation of the faith but negativism need not be approved all the time as a dogma to be followed. Perhaps pointing out to such development, Swami Vivekananda, the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna observed that:" The one great advantage of Bhakti is that it is the easiest and the most natural way to react to the great divine end in view; its greatest disadvantage is that in its lower form it often degenerates into hideous fanaticism. The fanatical crew in Hinduism or Mohammedanism or Christianity have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower planes of Bhakti. The singleness of attachment (NISTHA) to a loved object, without which no genuine love can grow is very often also the cause of the denunciation of everything else. All the weak and undeveloped minds in every religion or country have one way of loving their own ideal, i.e. by hating every other ideal."

The above statement of Swami Vivekananda is one hundred per cent true since what happens ordinarily is that in most cases the love of God gets submerged, but the hate for the sake of God (a type of bigotry) comes to the forefront in the minds of people and once this happens nothing can stop them and history has witnessed several such instances in the past. Swami Vivekananda has in his own lectures on 'BHAKTI YOGA' has said very assiduously: "Herein lies the explanation of why the same man who is so lovingly attached to his own ideal of God, so devoted to ideal of religion becomes a howling fanatic as soon as he sees or hears anything of any other ideal. Again the fanatic loses all power of judgement. Personal considerations are in his case of such absorbing interest that to him it is no question at all what a man says - whether it is right or wrong; but the one thing he is always particularly careful to know is who says it. The same man who is kind, good, honest and loving to the people of

his own opinion will not hesitate to do the vilest deeds when they are directed against persons beyond the pale of his own religious brotherhood"(COMPLETE WORKS Part III Page 32).

That Sufi-rules reflects the dogmatic assertion of hate even for the novices may come as a surprise to many, since Sufism is generally known for its catholicity amongst the non-Muslims public. Besides as per its Rule 20:"Fear and hope are both necessary to bad character" and further Rule 19 says that:"They all agree that the acts of men are not the cause of bliss or damnation because pleasure and wrath (rida and sukht) are eternal attributes of God, which are not changed by the acts of the men." On a deeper study of such rules one can gather, that the devotional aspect of Sufism is not all that soft and loving as that of the Vaishnavas of Hinduism. If one can say so, in its fanatical aspect, it is nearer to the Shakta cult of the Hindus specially in respect to the prominence given to the element of fear and God's wrath. For example one can quote the instance of Nri Simha Avatara and few other instances in Hindu mythology which are all exceptions to the general outlook of a merciful, loving and kind God usually depicted therein. May be this element of fanaticism amongst the Sufis is due to the association of the general Muslim laws and their influence and later imposition on them. Otherwise the Sufis are known for their liberal outlook and soft and loving nature.

Sri Ramakrishna himself was free from such contradictions since he was at home both as a Vaishanava and also as a Shakta - a nice combination though very rare in the annals of history. As a Vaisahana his love for Lord Krishna was no less than that of Gopis; and as a Shakta he loved goddess Kali in her terrible form. Moreover he was a liberal soul and a devotee with a fine sense of harmony and catholicity amongst all religions of the world. He not only successfully underwent Sadhana in Hinduism but also in Sufism and Christianity.

To the question Sufis believe in miracles, Rule 23 says:"They (Sufis) all agree in affirming the belief in the miracles of saints. The difference between the miracles of saints (KARAMAT) and the miracles of the Prophets (MUZIZAT) is that the Prophet is required to publish the miracles whereas the saints should conceal the grace (KARAMA) which God vouchsafed to him, unless God causes it to be publicly known." Swami Vivekananda declined to comply with the request of a news reporter of an

American newspaper to perform a miracle by saying: 'I cannot comply with the request of the news to work a miracle in proof of my religion. In the first place, I am no miracle worker, and in the second place the pure Hindu religion I profess is not based on miracles. We do not recognize such a thing as miracles. There are wonders wrought beyond our five senses, but they are operated by some law. Our religion has nothing to do with them. Most of the strange things which are done in India and reported in the foreign press are sleight-of-hand tricks or hypnotic illusions. They are not the performances of the wise men. They do not go about the country performing their wonders in the market place for pay. They can be seen and known only by those who seek to know the truth, and not moved by childish curiosity.' (VIVEKANANDA: His Gospel of Man-Making, Page 484).

Now we come to another subject which is very important in any religion and the Sufi Rule 25 and 26 says about the colour and dress as follows: The colour preferred by the Prophet was green. The prophet also said 'your best clothes are white.' Nevertheless he also commented that 'your most beautiful clothes and those most suitable for other peoples' There is a Foot Note by Milson against this section stating that, 'this section is intended to justify the Sufi practice of wearing clothes in special colours, which was considered by some as a deviation from the custom (sunna) of the Prophet. 'Prophet being so liberal-minded might have remarked: I like white: but let them wear what they like'- who knows. Kabir in one of his songs has sung 'let me return this chaddar as white as it was when it was given to me 'meaning let me live a pure life'. Coming to Sri Ramakrishna he was not at all particular about his dress neither was he about the ochre cloth which an ordained sannyasin was expected to wear. On the other hand the Master preferred to wear simple clean clothes mostly in white than any other colours. Possibly he too had a preference to white like Kabir and Prophet:

Songs, music and the singer all form part of any popular religion although few religions are against any type of music; Sufi Rules 27/28 lay down the conditions that are 'commendable to recite the Quran in a beautiful voice or melody, as long as this does not violate the meaning.' According to Milson."This section (regarding music) justifies the Sufi practice of mystical audition (SAMA)."
This Sufi 'SAMA' is somewhat

similar to Sama Veda of the Hindus which is recited in a low melodious tone. It seems that amongst the Carthusians there is a practice of remembering God known as 'VIGILS' which is a low tone prayer offered in the church without disturbing the congregation in the least. Sri Ramakrishna was also very fond of music, recitations of poems, slokas etc.etc. from his boyhood. Infact it was this love of music that made him love Narendra (later Swami Vivekananda) so much. He himself was a good singer and used to entertain his devotees with devotional songs urging them to join him in singing. The historical first meeting that took place between Sri Ramakrishna and Mahendranath Gupta who wrote the book 'RAMAKRISHNA KATHAMRITA' in Bengali under the pseudonym of 'M' was during evening prayers when the Master as engaged in singing something like the 'VIGILS' of Carthusians. It is also said that Sri Ramakrishna sang and danced and the devotees danced around him.

In fact the complete range of Rules from 28 to 32 concerns music, dance and prayer and the type of censorship exercised over them which is almost Platonic in kind but may be not so rigid or emotionally dry. It is said that Prophet himself classified the prayers (SAMAS) into those that were commendable and some as being repugnant and reprehensible. Particularly about poetry it was decreed that: "Poetry should therefore be judged on the basis of its subject matter and classified as (1) commendable, 2) permissible and 3) disapproved or forbidden. He who has divine knowledge may listen to such poems as are disapproved of for other people, because he can distinguish between natural inclination and reprehensible desire, between divine inspiration and Satanic temptation."

Sri Ramakrishna also did not like all kinds of songs being passed off as prayers. It did not bother him in the least as to what school of religion/philosophy of the poet/singer or the song itself belonged, infact most of his favourite songs and recitations came from Kamalakanta, Ramprasad and kirtans of Vaishnava poets of that time. He was choosy as to the meaning and wordings of the songs as well the tone of their rendering. Similarly he detested negative songs expressing despair and sorrow but loved to listen and sing songs expressing hope and joy as well as 'inspiring' songs which would have immeidate effect on the audience gathered round him.

Describing the effect these songs and poems will have on listeners and the need to be choosy regarding the nature of the songs/poems, Sufi Rule 30 says: "People who attend the Sufi audition differ as to their state while listening. Some are overcome by fear (khawf) or grief (huzn) or yearning (Shawq); it may cause them to weep and groan and tear their clothes and become unconscious. Others are overcome with hopes (raja) and joy (farah) and delight (istishar) and this may induce them to rejoice and dance and clap their hands" It is said that Nikos Kazantzakis, the famous novelist had an occasion to see such a group of Sufi dedicates dancing rhythmically and clapping their hands softly. Sri Ramakrishna was fond of clapping and dancing too: he used to get intoxicated with divine love and sing in praise of Divine Mother and often went into samadhi. Such incidents of his are narrated both in the Gospel and the Great Master in great details. It is said that in April 1885 when the Master's (Sri Ramakrishna's) throat became inflamed (which later turned out to be cancer) and he was cautioned against conversation and ecstasies, by doctors. Disregarding the doctors instructions he decided to attend the festival at Panihati." He joined the kirtan party of Navadvip Gosami, Mani Sen's guru and danced totally forgetting the world. Every now and then he stood still in samadhi....thousands of devotees were gathered together for the festival. Wherever one looked there was a forest of human heads. The crowd seemed to become infected by the Master's divine fervour and swayed to and fro, chanting the name of God until the very air seemed to reverberate with it....Sri Ramakrishna entered by turn into all the moods of ecstasy. In deep samadhi he stood still, his face radiating a divine glow...."(Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna P.255)

Sufi Rule No.32 describes the state of a person and his emotions and as such we cannot do better than quote Abu Abdullah al-Rudhabari on this: "The secret (SIRR) of him who is truthful in the SAMA consists of three things: (1) Knowledge of God, (2) Fulfillment of what is required by his spiritual state and (3) concentration of religious ambition (Jam al-himma). The listeners may be in three inner states: Love, fear and hope (mahabba, khwaf and raja). Movements in the course of SAMA may be inspired by three inner states; rapture (tarab), ecstatic yearning (wajd) and fear. Each of these has three characteristic symptoms: rapture - dancing, clapping and joy; ecstatic yearning - absence of selfhood (Ghayba) and

loss of personal will and consciousness (istilam) and screaming, fear or weeping, slapping oneself and moaning." This term moaning compares very favourably with the Hindu word of 'VIRAHĀ' as depicted in Vaishnava songs popularly known as kirtana. Sri Ramakrishna was a past master in the singing and listening to kirtana and sometimes dancing in ecstasy along with the devotees. This singing and dancing in rapture is called Mahabhava and is much more intense and emotional than 'Mahabba' of the Sufis. Sri Ramakrishna used to love to join the chorus of devotees singing these kirtans and dance imploring one and all to come and join in the singing and dancing. It is said that: "The crowd, with the Master in the centre, surged towards the temple of Radha Krishna. Only a small number could enter. The rest stood outside the portal and jostled with one another to have a look at Sri Ramakrishna. In a mood of intoxication he began to dance in the courtyard of the shrine. Every now and then his body stood transfixed in deep samadhi. Hundreds of people around him shouted the name of God, and thousands outside caught the strain and raised the cry with full-throated voices. The echo travelled over the Ganges, striking a note in the hearts of people in the boats on the holy river and they too chanted the name of god." (Gospel. Page 254) It is also narrated that once inspite of his indifferent health the Master went to a festival celebration at Kamarhati along with a group of devotees. As soon as the music started the Master went into ecstasy and highly inspired, started dancing. None could dare to stop him from dancing or even go near him in that high God-intoxicated state.

In the early days of the Ramakrishna Movement such inspired dancing and singing of Kirtans were occasionally observed, in which it is said that even some of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna participated along with others. Slowly these joyful events lost their spontaneity and now it has been completely stopped. Similarly in Sufi movement also such "SAMAS" are not held nowadays since some of the Sufis were of the opinion that music, poetry dance etc. were not that helpful in the development of a spiritual life. Anyway these 'SAMAS' of the good old days were like the Sama-Vedic chanting of the Hindus - an inspired expression of the inner exuberance in interaction with the outer mind if nothing else.

Milson nicely sums the entire part II when he says: "Section 32-38 define the place of Sufism in relation to other religious sciences. Sections

39-44 explain that the Sufis vary in accomplishments and rank. There are novices (MURIDUN), Sufis of intermediate rank (MUTAWASSIDIN) and knowers (ARIFUN)... Each Sufi should strive to achieve the stage which is proper to him. The novice should first become accomplished in the external part of Sufism, which is generally synonymous with the ADAB (ethical conduct)." This reminds us how Swami Vivekananda in place of 'ADAB' prescribed rules for the conduct of people in which he emphasized the importance of obedience, respect mutual understanding and relationship etc. in the brotherhood or the Order that he established and most of these were meant for the novices in particular. These can be considered as the external gates of conduct through which only right entry can take place. Besides the all round development which is expected from a novice, Swami Vivekananda admitted that (since) in some there may be more bhakti, in another more of karuna and in the third more of Jnana, so the growth should be according to individual tendencies only, only when there is enough freedom for this type of development, then only the growth and achievement will be scientific.

This outlook of Swami Vivekananda along with the rules he framed is somewhat similar to that of the Sufi-way which says: "Each Sufi should strive to achieve that stage which is proper for him." Lord Krishna also says in the Gita that one should follow the path which is most natural to him.

Coming back to the classification by Milson he says for the internal development "Section 45-48 praise the ethical qualities. Section 49-50 list and define briefly the Sufi stations and states. Section 51 explains that there are different ways to attain to the Sufi truth and that in each of these ways the novice should have a master to guide him. Rules 52-53 emphasize the value of ilm, religious learning." Sri Ramakrishna also gave great importance to the role of a teacher and he said ".....there are three types of religious teachers. The inferior teacher only gives instructions to the disciples but makes no inquiries about their progress. The mediocre teacher, for the good of the student, makes repeated efforts to bring the instructions home to him, begs him to assimilate it, and shows him love in many other ways. But there is a type a teacher who goes to the length of using force when he finds that the student is persistently unyielding: I call him the best teacher." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page

148) Stating the qualifications for a religious teacher he said: "The task of a religious teacher is indeed difficult. One cannot teach men without a direct command from God. People won't listen to you if you teach without such authority. Such teaching has no force behind it..One must first of all attain God through spiritual discipline or some other means. Thus armed with authority from God, one can deliver lectures." (Ibid. Page 168)

Leaving aside this summary portion let us have a glance at some more rules which are very apt to this study: Rule 34 says: "The religious scholars are classified in three groups; (1) traditionalists or ASHAB AL-HARDITH, (2) Jurists or FIQUAHA and (3) Sufi or ULAMA. The traditionalists are attached to the external meaning of the Hardith, they are the watchmen of religion. Fuquaha or jurists are there to deal with legal matters and according to the rule 37, "The Sufis are distinguished by lofty sciences and noble states (ahwal) and they discuss the science of mutual relations, the faults of commission and omission and the noble status (maquamat)." Then we can say that Sufis are like the yogis, the practical teachers dealing with the practice and also the psychology of religion.

Rule 39 states that, "The answers to questions about Sufism vary according to the spiritual station of the enquirer; the novice (MURID) is answered with regard to the external aspect of Sufism, that is concerning mutual ethics". This rigid attitude of teaching starting from the level of novice belies the wrong notion that Sufis are very liberal in teaching anything and everything to anybody and everybody as long as it proves popular. No. never:

The same Rule (39) states: "The Sufi of the middle rank (Mutawassit) is answered with regard to the inner states (ahwal). and the Knower (Arif) is answered with regard to the reality (al- haqiqa). The beginning of Sufism is leaving (action/practice) i.e. ilm, the middle is Praxis (amal) and the end is grace (kripa in Hindu theology). Like the Hindus who have adhikarabheda, like the abastha-bheda or the religious state of experience the Sufis also have ranks. For example it is stated that: "The Murid is a man of momentary experience (Waqt), the Sufi of the middle rank has inner spiritual states and the Sufi of the highest rank is reposeful breathing." It is also said that a "consummate Sufi (Muntahin) is in a position of stability and he is immune to the effects of the changeful states of mind or harsh circumstances,"(Rule 40). This is exactly the kind of state

of a 'STHITAPRJNA' in Gita and Patanjali-Yoga. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that: "...When a man abandons, O Partha, all the desires of the heart and is satisfied in the Self by the self, then he is said to be one stable in wisdom. He whose mind is not perturbed by adversity, who does not crave for happiness, who is free from fondness, fear and anger, is Muni of constant wisdom." (GITA Chap.2, Sloka 54 & 55). We can pick up just at random three instances where Sri Ramakrishna exemplified this state. There was one priest of Kalighat temple employed by Mathur Babu by name of Haldar who was very jealous of Sri Ramakrishna since Mathur Babu loved him very much. One day, just before dusk, the master was lying in a divine semiconscious state in Mathur's Janbazar House. There was no one near him. The Master's ecstasy was coming to an end and he was gradually having a little consciousness of the outer world, when Halder happened to come in. When he saw the Master alone in that state, he thought it to be just the opportunity he was looking for. He approached him, looked around and said again and again while pushing the holy person about: "O, man, tell me how you have made the Babu subservient to you? Why do you keep mum, feigning ignorance? How did you captivate him? Speak out." Although he repeated the questions again and again, the Master did not or could not say anything: for he had not then the power to speak at all. Haldar then became angry and kicked the Master very badly and went away. Devoid of egotism, the Master made no mention of the incident to any body. The second incident refers to the insult made to the Master by mistake by the people of Trailokya, son of Mathur Babu. Trailokya wishing to punish Hriday for worshipping his (Trailokya's daughter) asked him to leave the temple premises immediately. By mistake some one came and told Sri Ramakrishna that he too, must leave the garden. Without a murmur, the Master rose and walked towards the gate. Trailokya saw him from a distance and hurrying up to him said that he had never asked him (the Master) to leave at which Master returned to his room, as if nothing had happened. The third incident happened when once Narendra failed to come to Dakshineswar for one or two weeks, the Master sent for him but in vain. So one Sunday he set out for Calcutta to visit Narendra. He knew that he would find him in the evening congregation of the Brahmos. He went to the Brahmo temple, never suspecting that his appearance there might cause any displeasure to its members. Rather he had reason to think that they were generally well disposed towards him. The preliminary

ceremonies had been finished, and the preacher was about to deliver his sermon, when Sri Ramakrishna in a semi-conscious state entered. His unexpected arrival created a profound stir among the assembled devotees. All stood up to get better view of him. Narendra had seen him from his place in the choir. The preacher stopped his sermon. But the leading members present forgot to show even common courtesy to their august visitor....Sri Ramakrishna who did not notice the disturbance caused by his presence, went straight to the pulpit and fell into samadhi.....Narendra was mortified at the cold reception accorded to the Master and said "I can hardly describe the pain I felt that day to see the Master humiliated.....but he was not the least sorry for the incident and paid no heed to my words." (Life of Ramakrishna, Page 286.) The Master was one of the few who showed great equanimity under all circumstances.

Thus the rules proceed to Nos.41 and 42, wherein it is explained the difference between the external 'adab' and internal 'adab' which almost corresponds to Hindu concept of Antar-suchitabat and Bahir-suchita (Zahur). It is also said that "the whole of Sufism is 'adab' each moment (waqt), each state and each station has its 'adab'. Adab is the support of the poor and the decor of the rich." 'ADAB' actually means that by constant practice of humality and good conduct a person attains the highest and finest spiritual status. Sri Ramakrishna used to compare this attainment of the highest spiritual state to the practice of a gold-smith who passes a lump of gold or silver through a series of holes of varying circumferences in a wooden block to obtain the finest strand of the precious metals to make a piece of exquisite jewellery. It is said that Prophet saw a man jesting during prayer, and immediately remarked: "If his heart were humble, his limbs too would be submissive.: One is tempted to recall the resemblance of Sri Ramakrishna's limbs being as soft as his heart and as such he could hardly bear anybody with impure feelings touch his feet or any part of his body.

Rule 43 of the Sufis classifies people according to Adab in the following manner: (1) People of this world (2) people of religion and (3) the choicest of the people of religion. And "...the adab of the people of religion are, in addition to religious learning, to discipline oneself, to observe the legal prohibitions, to abstain from morally dubious things and to hasten to do goods works" and " the adab of the choicest people of

religion consist of presevering the heart." Swami Vivekananda was also very fond of referring to 'heart' again and again. Once he said:"It is the heart which takes one to the highest plane, which intellect can never reach; it goes beyond intelect and reaches what is called inspiration."(Complete Works, Vol I.page 413) What Sri Ramakrishna has called yearning - perseverance, forbearence or endurance has been termed by the Sufis as 'Himma' - spiritual ambition or capacity.

Talking about moral qualities Sufi Rule 45 says:" The most noble characteristics of the Sufis are their moral qualities. Aisha said that the ethical nature of the Prophet was the Quran. The prophet said:"The closet to me on the day of resurrection will be he who is best with regard to ethics. Bad moral nature is a sign of ill fortune." Abu-Bakr-al-Katham supporting this view remarked:"Sufism is ethical in disposition, so whoever is better than you in his ethics is greater than you in Sufism". Sufism has such a strong emphasis on the purity of life is a novel thought to many who think of Sufism as an easy way and halfway-house of compromises and pitfalls in life and that anything and everything can go in the name of Sufism excepting this concept of purity. What a misnomer and misunderstanding of Sufism. Infact what can be said about maitri, ahimsa and karuna of Hindus is applicable in Sufism also for it says:"Its minimal requirements were to suffer evil with forbearance, to abstain from retribution and to have compassion fro him who wrongs you. It is these qualities which are characteristic of the Sufis and not what is said and committed by the simulators (mutashabbinum): their perverted claims are denounced." Regarding this denouncement, Milson writes in a foot note that it seems "this denouncement is directed against the would be Malamatis, who under the guise of purposely incurring censure actually sought to satisfy their desires." Like the Malamatis, authoritarians are there in every religion to dominate and rule over others mostly by the virtue of their position and power.

Generally, a Sufi is known for his clean conduct and simple and austere life and this (his) conduct seldom contradicts the social laws, personal laws and as a matter of fact - it is least controversial. This religious code of 'SHARIA' and sainthood can easily go together according to Sufi estimation. Some of the deeper aspects of Sufi life and code of conduct can be had in Rule 45, wherein the stations or 'AVASTHAS'

(stages) as these are called in Hindu tradition, are enumerated : these stations or stages come one after another usually during the course of sadhana: These stations are : Awakening out of carelessness, repentance (Tawaba), returning (inaba), moral scrupulosity (wara), examination of the soul (muhasabat al-nafs), aspiration (irada), renunciation (zuhd), poverty (faqr), veracity (sidq) and forbearance (tasabbur), which is the last station of novices. Then comes patience (sabr), satisfaction (rida), total sincerity (ikhlas), trust in God (tawakkul)."

Thus in a most practical and scientific manner these stations or stages are enumerated by Sufis : for instance Rule 50 says about these stages in the following order:1) attentive observation (muraquaba), 2) nearness (gurb), 3) love (mahabba), 4) hope (raja), 5) fear (khawf), 6) diffidence (haya). The last four are considered to result from the state of nearness, because, while in the latter state, some people are overcome by fear diffidence and others by love and hope. Then come (a) yearning (shawq), (b) intimacy (uns) (c) serenity (tumanina) (d) certainty (yaquin) and (e) experience of the vision (mushahada) which is the last of the states. Then comes various forms of divine inspiration, signs (Fawatih), appearances of light and graces, all of which are inaffable."

Sri Ramakrishna has also explained the seven planes (stages or stations described by the Sufis) in detail. Talking about the realisation of God by householders and sannyasins he said:"But it is quite different with genuine sannyasis. A bee lights on flowers and on nothing else. To the chatak all water except rain is tasteless. It will drink no other water, but looks up agape for the rain that falls when the star Swati is in the ascendant. It drinks only that water. A real sannyasi will not enjoy any kind of bliss except the bliss of God....There is much similarity between the seven planes described in the Vedanta and the six 'centres' of Yoga. The first three planes of the Vedas may be compared to the first three yogic centres, namely, Muladhara, Svadhisthana and Manipura. With ordinary people the mind dwells in these three planes - at the organs of evacuation and generation, and at the navel. When the mind ascends to the fourth plane, the centre is designated in yoga as Anahata, it sees the individual soul as a flame. Besides it sees light. At this the aspirant cries:'Ah!What is this? Ah!What is this?"

Afterwards, "When the mind rises to the fifth plane, the aspirant wants to hear only about God. This is the Vishuddha centre of Yoga. The sixth plane and the centre known by the Yogi as Ajna (Chakra) are one and the same. When the mind rises there, the aspirant sees God. But still there is a barrier between God and the devotee. It is like a barrier of glass in a lantern, which keeps one from touching the light. King Janaka used to give instructions about Brahma Jnana from the fifth (5) plane. Sometimes he dwelt on the fifth plane and sometimes on the sixth (6th). After passing the six centres the aspirant arrives at the seventh (7th) plane. Reaching it the mind merges in Brahman. The individual soul and the supreme soul becomes one. The aspirant goes into Samadhi. His consciousness of the body disappears. He loses the knowledge of the outer world. He does not see the manifold anymore. His reasoning comes to a stop." (Gospel. Page 245)

Sufis also sought to go beyond the socalled mundane plane of reason and called for a state of spiritual intuition which they termed as 'ILM.' This is explained in Rule Nos. 52/53 of the Sufis. They say that 'ILM' is the root and 'AMAL' the branch and "the majority of the Sufi masters consider 'ILM' to be superior to both 'marifa' (gnosis) and 'AQL' (intellect or reason), because Allah has the attitude of 'ILM' and because 'ILM' has dominance over reason and not vice versa."

Part III of 'A Sufi-Rule For Novices' deals mostly with conduct and communication and relationships. Although it covers a very big portion of this Kitab Adab al-Muridin since all of it is not that universal to be applied everywhere no harm will be done if we skip good many of them. These are like the Smritis of Hinduism which the Hindus generally tend to treat as very auxilliary for the spiritual life: accepting the whole lot as useful they are kept rather treated separately in the Indian tradition. Sri Ramakrishna also attached very little importance to such conduct rules since his main interest was in the spiritual life directly. He observed: "A man may live in a mountain cave, smear his body with ashes, observe fasts and practise austere discipline, but if his mind dwells on wordly objects, on 'woman and gold'. I say, 'Shame on him!'" (Ibid. P 402)

Sufism is very particular about everything even the purpose of conversation, for Rule 54 of Sufi ethics states that conversation should be mainly to advice and help in guiding other people in spiritual life and the

a Sufi should speak to people according to their intellectual capacity. About the novice the rule says "that the novice should not speak on any question unless he is asked about it and his answer should be suited to the interrogator. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "...preaching? It is only a man's vanity that makes him think of preaching. A man is but an insignificant creature. It is God alone who will preach - God who has created the sun and moon and so illumined the universe. Is preaching such a trifling affair. You cannot preach unless God reveals Himself to you and gives you the command to preach." (Gospel page 668). This is also exactly the reason why Swami Vivekananda wished to classify the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna into two groups: one which will be purely individualistic and subjective in nature and relevant to the person addressed mainly; and the other group of teachings which are mostly universal and objective and applicable in general. Sometimes individual situations and circumstances make it necessary that certain teachings and dogmas cannot be accepted universally, and as such provision has to be made for such circumstances.

Different views are made regarding Rule 55 which says: "The novice should ask only questions pertaining to his station". And "he should not speak about what he has not practised, but some say that it is permissible." Similarly regarding the eligibility of a person to receive knowledge: it is said that Prophet was in favour of "knowledge should be divulged only to qualified persons although another view has it that it may be divulged to others as well. One should not speak in front of a more learned man." Sri Ramakrishna used to say that God is the best judge to decide who should receive the knowledge. He said: "It is all decided beforehand by God what each one shall receive. A mother-in-law used to measure rice with a dish for her daughters-in-law. But it was not enough for them. One day the dish was broken and that made the girls happy. But the mother-in-law said to them: 'Children you may shout and dance, but I can measure the rice with palm of my hand.' Surrender everything at the feet of God. What else can you do? Give HIM the power of attorney. Let HIM do whatever HE thinks best." (Ibid. Page 369). Actually due to Sufism slowly acquiring the character of a folklore none of above qualifications and requisites were of much importance now. May be Sufism although very popular was reduced to a mere cult of not much spiritual depth because of the lack of intellectual giants of a high spiritual calibre. Due to

this in many countries Sufism was reduced to a mere folk religion. This was a sad state of affairs indeed taking into consideration the huge possibility with which it had originally started.

Again Sufism could not escape the imposition of priesthood altogether although Rule 56 clearly stated that:"One should not seek to obtain social standing or wordly goods through his knowledge".

Sufis gave much importance to hearing and learning for, Rule 56 said:"Whoever hears something of the Sufi doctrine (Ulum-al-qawm) and practises it, it becomes wisdom in his heart, and those who listen to him will derive benefit from it...." and "if words come out of the heart they will enter the heart but if they come from the tongue they will not pass beyond the ears." This emphasis on hearing and learning by Sufis runs parallel to what Sri Ramakrishna advocated. He preferred 'Sravana' (teaching by hearing - the traditional mode adopted by the Rishis of Vedic time) to reading or study by oneself without the guidance of a Guru. He also laid importance on the authenticity, that is based on experience in life as a vital necessity for those who wished to teach. He explained: "It is extremely difficult to teach others. A man can teach only if God reveals Himself to him and gives the command.....unless you have a command from God, who will listen to you....God does reveal Himself to man and speak. Only then may one receive His command". How forceful are the words of such a teacher. They can move mountains. But mere lectures? People will listen to them for a few days and then forget them".

Actually what the Sufis termed as 'ILM' is that which comes from a learned man, who has direct knowledge on the matter 'Alim'. Then it becomes authentic to some extent ofcourse. That is to say knowledge without actual life experiences and some kind of fulfillment is theroretical or intellectual knowledge only. Rule No. 60 has pronounced that:" If you need the knowledge of a man, you should not examine his faults." However Sri Ramakrishna's view was quite different on this point. It is said " Sri Ramakrishna often encouraged his disciples to test him before accepting him as their guide. He always advised them to notice if the religious teacher practised what he preached....You must examine a sadhu by day and by night before believing in him." (Life of Sri Ramakrishna, page 336)

Like some of the Bhakti school's injunctions, Sufi Rule 62 states: "The most appropriate thing for the 'murid' (probationers) is to choose only pure food, drink and clothes, for thus he will enhance his inner state." Sri Ramakrishna was also very particular as to what food the novices under him ate and he had instructed his wife as to how much food each student should get.

The role of repentance in any religion is noteworthy. So also among the Sufis wherein Rule No.64 states that repentance or twaba is of great importance for it is said that Prophet said that "The repenter is the beloved of God" and "the repenter is one of those whose evil acts God will change into good ones....Repentance is a religious duty for all muslims. Failure to repent of a sin is more serious than committing the sin. There is time to repent until death or until the locking of the gate of repentance." This is something unique in most of the semitic religions specially Islam. Repentance should not be misunderstood with mercy or 'kripa' which is something quite different. Repentance keeps the soul refreshed and helps in forgetting ones sins. The positive side of it is that it helps in freeing the person or the subject of any mistake or sin. Although amongst the Hindus, repentance is not that much of importance still it is indirectly mentioned here and there in the scriptures.

From self repentance we come to the subject of 'self-examination' which is more or less a simple psychological approach than any philosophic or pedantic Vedanta outlook of Vichara and Viveka. Amongst the Sufis it is said that "The murid should recognise his own faults and know how to remove them. He should control his soul by exertions and examinations of conscience. He should reveal his inner state to his 'shaykh' and constantly ask for his instruction and advice". This process of self-mirroring is a very good spiritual excercise, akin to modern methods of psychology and ancient Yoga.

Stressing the importance of love and devotion rather than the outward expressions of religious belief Sufi Rule 68 states: "It is nobler to engage in the movement of the heart than to perform outward acts of worship" This dictum is in line with Swami Vivekananda's idea of worship for he used to say: "Worship is valid and leads to the goal if the heart is pure and the heart is sincere. Ceremonials are the lowest form (of worship); next God external and after that God internal." (Complete Works

of Swami Vivekananda). Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "Prema is like a cord: by prema God is bound to the devotee. He can no longer run away. If a devotee prays to God with real longing from heart, God cannot help revealing Himself to Him:" (Gospel).

All religions give importance to service; Sufism does not lag behind for it says in Rule No.70: "To render service to his brethren is more valuable for the novice than to be engaged in supererogatory prayers." The problem is how to reconcile between these two? Perhaps a Vivekanandite would try to solve it by asking one to open ones heart first, to love and then render whatever service is required. He would quote Swami Vivekananda who said: 'Those who serve the servants of God are His greatest servants' and 'it is the greatest privilege in our life that we are allowed to serve the Lord in all these shapes'

Referring to the need for a novice not to leave the Guru till he gets the knowledge, meaning thereby that submission and surrender to ones teacher leads to the opening of the heart, Sufi Rule 71 states: "The murid should not leave his Shaykh before the eye of his heart opens." and that the "distinctive mark of the 'murid' is to listen and obey." Sri Ramakrishna talking about this perseverance of a sisya to be with the Guru once jokingly said: "Don't you know how easily the people of Calcutta get excited?.... You may see them digging a well at a certain place. They say they want water. But if they strike a stone they give up that place; they begin at another place. And there, perchance, they find sand: they give up the second place too. Next they begin at a third place; and so it goes on...." (Gospel page 141). What exactly he meant to convey was that people should continue digging in one place for quite sometime so that water can be reached at some depth or level atleast.

Leave alone Sri Ramakrishna who was noted for his austere life style, none of the real and sincere gurus or spiritual leaders like any ostentation or show either in life or in the mode of worship. Specially amongst the spiritually enlightened Hindus as well as amongst the followers of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda 'MANAS-PUJA' is considered to be the best of all types of worship since it is purer form of worship without any ostentation whatsoever. Similarly Sufi Rule 72 says"....any act of spirituality can be accomplished only by sincerity, namely by keeping it pure from any ostentation." However the last

sentence of the Rule is not only very significant but also very stiff as it focusses another aspect of sincerity, which one can even dare to say is negative in nature for it says:" Sincerity can be achieved only by recognising the worthlessness of mankind." However Sri Ramakrishna was more positive and hopeful with regard to human nature for he said:"Yes, there is no hope for a wordly man if he is not sincerely devoted to God. But he has nothing to fear if he remains in the world after realizing God. Nor need a man have any fear whatever of the world if he attains sincere devotion by practising spiritual discipline now and then in solitude." (Ibid. Page 126).

Sri Ramakrishna has spoken a lot about this sincerity. Once while speaking to the Brahmo Samaj devotees he said:"...yours is also a path of devotion. Blessed you are indeed that you chant the name of Hari and sing the Divine Mother's glories. I like your attitude. You don't call the world a dream, like the non- dualists. You are not Brahmajnanis like them; you are bhaktas, lovers of God. That you speak of HIM as person is also good. You are devotees. You will certainly realize HIM if you call on HIM with sincerity and earnestness." Again while warning against the pitfalls involved in doing:"too many activities (like charity, building of temples, hospitals etc.) I may think I am doing unselfish work, but it turns out to be selfish. People who carry to excess the giving of alms or the distributing of food among the poor, fall victims to the desire of acquiring name and fame, (a kind of ostentation no doubt)". He continued:"Sambhu Mallick once talked about establishing hospitals, dispensaries and schools, making roads, digging public reservoirs and so forth. I asked him Supposing God appears before you, then will you ask HIM to build hospitals and dispensaries for you? A lover of God never says that. He will rather say:'O Lord, give me a place at Thy Lotus Feet., Keep me always in Thy company. Give me sincere and pure love for Thee." (Gospel: page 143).

On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna spoke to Vijaya Krishna Goswami:"With sincerity and earnestness one can realize God through all religions. The Vaishnavas will realize God and so will the Saktas, the Vedantists and the Brahmos. The Mussalmans and Christians will realise God if they are earnest and sincere".

What historic statements these are on sincerity, when in today's world the first casualty in every field including religion is sincerity and truth. Sri Ramakrishna's simplest medicine for all ills in social and religious life is sincerity and he told with all sincerity at his command: "With all the sincerity of your heart resign yourself to God and drive all your worries out of your mind." (Ibid, Page 628).

The last sentence of the Rule 72 specifically mentions that this sincerity can be had only when one becomes aware of the 'worthlessness' of the mankind (i.e. worldliness) Giving an example of a child the Master illustrates this point when he says: "One must have child-like faith in Guru's words. God cannot be realised by a mind that is hypocritical, calculating or argumentative. One must have faith and sincerity. Hypocrisy will not do. To the sincere, God is very near: but HE is far, far away from a hypocrite." Like a child, one must "...become sincerely grief stricken for the vision of the Mother. And to him alone the Mother comes running leaving all HER other duties." (Ibid.P.673)

Sufis do not remain content by just eulogizing sincerity but give due importance to watchfulness also as mentioned in Rule 73 it also petitions one to keep a watch over the lower soul (nafs), -al-Wasti is reported to have quoted a saying: "The soul is an idol, looking at it with sympathy is idolatory, whereas looking at it with scrutiny is worship." This statement, no doubt, has a profound depth for the more one scrutinises one self, the more one becomes aware of ones qualities. Rule 73 gains more importance when one ponders more over the following statement: "Nafs (the lower soul) is an opposite to God. Nafs makes the same demands, obedience and admiration of man as does God. It is a 'delicate matter' lodged within this mould (of the body)." In Sri Ramakrishna's words this lower-self (or Nafs of the Sufis) is nothing but the 'Katcha-Ami' (the immature ego or 'I') and the 'Pucca-Ami' (the real 'I') is the Godly spirit in the man. The 'servant ego' the 'knowledge ego' or the 'devotee ego' may be called the 'ripe ego or pucca-ami', It is different from the 'unripe ego' which makes one feel 'I am the doer. I am the son of a wealthy man, I am learned, I am rich...'

One can take it that Rule 74 is somewhat akin to the above conception of Sri Ramakrishna for it says: "The soul (person here) is the substratum of blameworthy qualities. The spirit (RUH) is the mine of good

and the soul is the mine of evil. The intellect is the army of the spirit and the success which is granted by Allah is its reinforcement. Capricious desire is the army of the soul and the failure is its reinforcement. Then how to choose and pick those that are worthy to be followed? For this Rule 75 advises: "All matters are of three kinds: those whose rightness is obvious, so they should be followed; those whose error is obvious, so they should be avoided: those which are dubious, and so should be left aside until the right course becomes clear." In an attempt to make it much more clear it further adds "for guidance the rule is further very straight and clear, for if you are in doubt as to which of two things is the best, follow the one which is farthest from your desire. The murid should strive to exchange the blame worthy qualities of his soul for the opposite praiseworthy qualities." Just like the Rule 75 advocates that "those which are dubious and so should be left aside until the right course becomes clear". Hindu tradition also calls for 'vichara' and 'viveka' and says that the one which is farthest from desire is the best to choose. The Master used to say that everyone is bound: by certain emotions: "There are eight fetters with which man is bound: shame, hatred, fear, pride of caste, hesitation, the desire to conceal....the three gunas - sattava, rajas and tamas have men under their control." (Ibid page 438) And to overcome the eight fetters and to raise from tamas to sattva one requires 'vichara' and 'viveka'.

Companions and companionship are very important in any society infact it is vital for the very existence of man. But their presence also warrants the need for rules and regulations too, specially in the spiritual life and quest. Recognising this aspect Sufi Rule 76 states very practically: "It is better to sit alone than with an evil companion, and it is better to sit with a worthy companion than to sit alone." The Rule refers to the three sayings of the Prophet in this regard as follows: (1) "Man is in the religion of his friend therefore you should consider carefully whom you befriend." (2) "A man who mixes with people and endures the evil is superior to one who does not mix with people." (3) "There is no benefit in him who does not befriend others and is not befriended." Finally the Rule advises "Not to associate with people who are not of their kind, to act with altruism (ithar), not to accumulate property and to extend their help to others." Sri Ramakrishna also preferred to be alone than to be in the company of people who used to talk of worldly things. He said: ".....one

doesn't enjoy any conversation but that of God. I used to weep when I heard people talk about of worldly matters. When I accompanied Mathur Babu on a pilgrimage we spent few days in Banaras at Raja Babu's house. One day I was seated in the drawing-room with Mathur Babu, Raja Babu and others. Hearing them talk about various wordly things, such as their business losses and so forth. I wept bitterly and said to the Divine Mother: 'Mother where have you brought me? I was much better off in the temple garden at Dakshineswar alone. Here I am in a place where I must hear about 'woman and gold'. But at Dakshineswar I could avoid it.' "Gospel, page 119).

Sri Ramakrishna was also of the same view as the 1st saying of the Prophet that "Man is in the religion of his friend, therefore you should consider carefully whom you befriend", for he said: "Maya is nothing but 'woman and gold'. A man living in its midst gradually loses his spiritual alertness. He thinks all is well with him. The scavenger carries a tub of night-soil on his head and in course of time loses his repulsion to it." (Gospel Page 131)

This concept of companionship is continued in Rule 77 also for it says:"The man most worthy of your company is he who agrees with your religious beliefs and before whom you are ashamed (for your faults.)" He should not associate with people who are opposed to his religious affiliation even if they are related to him is also decreed. However Swami Vivekananda was of the opinion that:" One infinite religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist and this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways" (Complete Works, Vol.IV. Page 180)

To impress the importance of the kind of company one keeps, Sri Ramakrishna explained to Nityagopal (a devotee) who lamented that "I don't like people's company. They say all kinds of things about me. That sometimes frightens me, but again I feel great strength within". "Nangta (Totapuri - guru for the Master for sometime) told me that there lived in the monastery an ascetic who had acquired occult powers. He used to go about with his eyes fixed on the sky. But when one of his companions left him he became disconsolate". (Gospel Page 732) Such is the power of companionship. That is to say man cannot stay without a companion also. This topic of seeking the companionship of God figured often in the conversations the Master had with his devotees which naturally evoked

the appropriateness of God with form and a formless God. Sri Ramakrishna said "One should not discuss the discipline of the Impersonal God or the path of knowledge with a bhakta. Through great effort perhaps he is just cultivating a little devotion. You will injure it if you explain away everything as a mere dream. Kabir was a worshipper of the Impersonal God. He did not believe in Siva, Kali or Krishna. He used to make fun of them and say that Kali lived on the offerings of rice and banana and that Krishna danced like a monkey when the Gopis clapped their hands", (Gospel page 354.)

For the sake of good companionship Sri Ramakrishna offered his own example by saying:"But I accept God with form when I am in the company of people who believe in that ideal, and I also agree with those who believe in the formless God". (Gospel page 128). The importance of Divine Companionship as envisaged by the Master is best illustrated when we find him praying and pleading with the Divine Mother to reveal Herself now and then to the devotees, so that they also can feel that they are in Her company. Like a child he pleaded with Her: ".....if you keep them in the world, Mother, then please reveal yourself now and then. otherwise how will they live? How will they be encouraged, if they don't see you once in a while? But you may do whatever You like in the end." (Gospel page 381)

Describing vividly the desperate desire of one, for comapanion ship Sri Ramakrishna narrated a story:"A ghost sought a companion. It is said that a man who dies on a Saturday or Tuesday becomes a ghost. Therefore, whenever the ghost saw anybody fall from a roof or stumble and faint on the road on either of these days he would run to him, hoping that the man, through an accidental death, would become a ghost and be his companion. But such was his ill luck that everyone revived. The poor thing (the ghost) could not get a companion. "(Ibid page 717.)

Sri Ramakrishna was also wary like the Sufis about with whom one kept company, he used to say:"It is not good to live in the company of bad people. A man should stay away from them and thus protect himself"

Being wordly-wise the Master knew how like-minded people crave for the company of each other and as such he invited Vidyasagar: "Come again. One hemp smoker rejoices in the company of another hemp-smoker. They even embrace each other. But they hide at the sight

of people not of their own kind. A cow licks the body of her calf but she threatens a strange cow with her horns." Expanding the illustration he said: "Again a vulture loves the company of another vulture" When he said this, his doctor who was there supported him by saying "It has also been noticed that a vulture runs away for fear of a crow."

Talking about the benefits or otherwise of constant company of each other the master spoke almost in a scientific and modern manner regarding even the effects of environment on oneself thus: "I visited the museum once. I was shown some fossils. A whole animal had become stone. Just see what an effect has been produced by the company (Here environment). Likewise, by constantly living in the company of holy men one verily becomes holy." (Ibid. Page 400/401)

Any number of statements made by Sri Ramakrishna stressing on the importance of 'company' in spiritual life can be quoted: but because of lack of space let us listen to him once more. He narrates a story to his devotees who have gathered around him to listen to him: "When the Divine Mother was born as the daughter of King Himalaya, She showed Her various forms to Her father. The King said, 'I want to see Brahman.' Thereupon the Divine Mother said: 'Father, if that is your desire, then you must seek the company of holy men. You must go into solitude, away from the world, and now then live in holy company.' (Gospel, page 307)

Being and living in the company of good people is just not enough as is declared by Sufi Rule 78 which commands that: "The Sufi should undertake to serve his brethren and companions (Khidmat-al-ikhwan) and help them in obtaining their sustenance. He should endure their offence and should not rebuke them unless they transgress the law. He should recognise the value of everyman. Sufyan Uyayna said: 'whoever is ignorant of the value of other people is more ignorant of his value.' He also said: 'Only he has no value whatsoever who belittles the value of other people.' None can be sure of the effect of this particular Rule on Sufi Movement and how far it was observed.

But one thing can be said with conviction and this is that rule is very practical as a guidance to any religion or sect but it is doubtful as to how many brotherhoods (both monastic or non-monastic) can even mention such a rule in their code of conduct. However in the vows of the Ramakrishna Order that are administered during the holy inordination

ceremony there is a particular vow which has to be taken as the aspirant vowing to render all possible honour and respect to one and all irrespective of a person's status or the privileges enjoyed by him. That is to say that all should be treated with honour and respect without any exceptions.

What is most striking and unique in Sufism specially wherein it has been mentioned that, "He (meaning all the Sufis) including the authorities or those managing the order, should endure their offence and should not rebuke them unless they transgress the Law. He should recognise the value of everyman." No doubt this is a very wonderful idea to be put into practice. However it is sad to note how in most of the Orders specially religious including Hinduism and Christianity the hierarchy have spoiled this universal spirit of respect and regard toward the man specially in the lower ranks. Those occupying higher seats seems to forget the famous words of Swami Vivekananda: "It is not easy to be a disciple: great preparations are necessary, many conditions have to be fulfilled" and "A sapling must be hedged about for protection: but when it becomes a tree, a hedge would be a hinderance" (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda: Vol; VIII pages 220 and 107).

Regarding the need for rectification of any mistake or faults in a open straight forward manner Sufi Rule 78 says:" Blessed be the man who would indicate my faults to me" (Umar). However Rule 79 warns that:"His association with each person should be according to his state and is appropriate for him, with Shaykhs and seniors - with respect and service, with ones peers, with cheerfulness, informality, agreement, kindness and spontaneity". Envisaging such a situation, the Ramakrishna Math Rules framed by Swami Vivekananda declared that as far as possible there should be no back-biting and maligning of anybody since it causes dissension in the Order.

It is a well known fact that undue flattery is worse than abuse and Sufi Rule 80 supports this by stating:"He should not flatter his fellows in what is contrary to religious requirements." Since flattery causes immense damage sometimes to the men and institutions, Sri Ramakrishna himself could not bear the unnecessary flattery and glorification of God even. For him discrimination and dispassion were of great importance atleast in the beginning for he had said:"What can you achieve by mere lecturing and scholarship without discrimination and dispassion....first of all set up God

in the shrine of your heart and then deliver lectures as much as you like....First of all dive deep. Plunge to the bottom and gather up the gems. Then you may do other things." (Gospel Page 125).

Talking about the relationship between a teacher and the disciple it is almost same as that in Rule 81 i.e.:"Companionship with the young - with compassion, guidance and instruction. He should warn them when necessary." Every Order specially spiritual/religious orders are very particular about obedience from the disciples. Swami Vivekananada was very particular about this type of obedience; he said "The first requisite for organisation is obedience and the first thing needed is obedience." Just like Swamiji Juniyad also said:"If you do not believe in my words disassociate yourselves from me"This is quoted in Rule 82 which continues saying:"Complete obedience and respect towards the master are required." And as per Swami Vivekananda's Math Rules, the Sangha Guru, the monastic head of the Order is a manifest form of the Power that Sri Ramakrishna was (during his life time) and as such commands the same obedience and respect. Similarly the Sufi rule 82 concludes:"He (the Sufi) should behave towards the Shaykh like the companions did with the Prophet in following the ethics of the quran." (QURAN: 49:1,2 and 24:63)

The best way to repay, they say, a person's offence is to return the offence. What in common parlance is known as 'repaying in the same coin'. Sufi Rule 85 says:"Offences by the ignorant should be answered as the Prophet did?" (quoted 7:67, 28/55, 45/14 etc)."It is also said that Shabi was once reviled by someone, and Shabi replied, 'If what you say is true, may God forgive me, and if it is false, may God forgive you!'. Sri Ramakrishna has very effectively illustrated this by narrating a funny story: "Once a barber was shaving a gentleman. The latter was slightly cut by the razor. At once he cried out, 'Damn:' But the barber didn't know the meaning of the word. He put his razor and other shaving articles aside, tucked up his shirt-sleeves - it was winter - and said: 'You said "damn" to me. Now you must tell me its meaning' The gentleman said: 'Don't be silly. Go on with your shaving. The word doesn't mean anything in particular: but shave a little more carefully.' But the barber wouldn't let him off so easily. He said, 'If "damn" means something good, then I am a "damn": my father is a "damn" and all my ancestors are "damns". But if it means something bad, then you are a "damn", your father is a "damn" and all

your ancestors are "damns". They are not only "damns" but "damn - damn -da-damn:" (Gospel: Page 667)

Other Sufi Rules 86 and 87 are very similar to the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna to his house-holder devotees. The common point between both Sufism and what Sri Ramakrshna said was that 'dharma' and ethical life should be imparted in the family itself, because 'dharma' is the only protection. He once said:"So you are leading a householder's life. That is very good. It is like fighting from a fort. There are many disadvantages in fighting in an open field. So many dangers, too. Bullets may hit you: But one should spend some time in solitude and attain knowledge. Then one can lead the life of a householder." (Gospel Page 411). But Sufi Rule 87 has a special significance since it warns about the dangers although indirectly about the friendship between generations (age-wise) and it is scared about the old keeping the company of the young and has mercilessly dubbed it as weakness and stupidity. Once the master rebuked Mahendra Gupta for discussing with his (M's) students wordly affairs:"This kind of conversation is not good. It isn't desirable to indulge in any talk but talk of God. You are their senior and you are intelligent. You should not have encouraged them to talk such matters."(Gospel P 122) Sufi Rule 88 allows everything for the flourishing of companionship in a brotherhood excepting unlawful acts, malice and envy. So also Swami Vivekananda has warned again and again the brotherhood which he established about malice and envy in particular amongst themselves for it can prove to be a potential threat to the Organisation itself.

No doubt, if properly and deeply scrutinized there may exist some apparent contradiction between one rule and other. For instance Rule 72 has spoken eloquently of sincerity against all ostentation. But at the same time Rule 89 mentions:"It is more meritorious to be (with regard to one's own piety) in order to gain social esteem and be thereby be able to assist another Muslim than to act in total sincerity for the sake of one's salvation." But these are minor points which one has to tolerate in any spiritual code of conduct.

Now we pass on to the characteristic rules of most of the Semitic religions and ethics regarding the different limbs of the body. Sri Ramakrishna has spoken of different kinds of eyes and ears including the body that emerges after intense sadhana to help one to be in tune with

the divine and its final message or intuition. Vedic religion also has some such analogical comparision between the soul and the body. under different realms of gods and goddesses limbwise - for a final co-ordination with the Cosmic. The idea was to bring out a complete harmony between the body and the mind and ultimately focuss upon the body with its limbs as a world in itself, a mini but superb constellation within this Cosmic universe - almost a parallel in reflection. But those Sufi ethical norms of conduct from Rules 91-97 are a different sort altogether and much more prosaic in character and are of a very practical nature than any spiritual or theological imagination. And the process seems to be more a mind drilling process than a process drilled by the mind. Besides it gives only a fragmental and regimental approach which we find in the early stages of Upanishadic parables which were completely discarded in favour of a holistic approach and due to the emergence of the idea of something which was complete and whole as the Reality in the course of development of knowledge in the human mind.

Sufi Rule 92 proclaims almost in a feudalistic manner: "Every limb has its own special ethics. Good ethics with regard to God is that none of your limbs should move for any purpose save for the pleasure of God." In Hindu tradition also it is advised that the various organs be utilised for the adoration of the Lord - hands to worship, legs to go on pilgrimage to holy places, tongue to sing praises of the Lord, mind to think nothing but about the Lord etc.etc. Sri Ramakrishna used to tell about his experience when his limbs underwent some involuntary manipulations: Once he narrated pointing out to the granite Lord Shiva idol on the parapet of the Natmandir facing the main temple of Mother Kali at Dakshineswar that his limbs would get themselves locked up involuntarily and assume the same posture of Lord Shiva and he used to sit still for hours together in deep meditation with one pointed devotion. He also found it difficult to come down from this highly illumined state of mind to normal every day existence. He very aptly compared this state of bliss to a room securely locked from inside barring thereby the entry of any outside elements.

Deliberating on the role of tongue in the spiritual field Sufi Rule 92 states: "The tongue should be busy in reciting God's names (DHIKR) and in saying good things of the brethren, praying for them and giving them counsel. It should not say to them things which they deslike....the tongue

was created as an interpreter for the heart. Silence is praiseworthy because it is 'a cover for the ignorant and adornment for the intelligent'. "Sri Ramakrishna realising the potentiality of the tongue to do harm, to do mischief he warned: "...All thing in the world - The Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, the six system of philosophy - have been defiled, like the food that has been touched by the tongue, for they have been read or uttered by the tongue. Only one things has not been defiled in this way and that is Brahman. No one has ever been able to say what Brahman is." (Gospel page 102)

Then follows the Sufi Rules 93, 94,95 which implores a person to use all his bodily organs for spiritual advancement and realisation of truth. In Hindu tradition, one of the most important Upanishads - MUNDAKOPANISHAD starts with the invocation: "Om bhadram karnebihi srunuyaama..... Brahispatirdadhatu" (Shanti Patha) which when roughly translated means: "O ye Gods, may we hear with our ears (always what is auspicious); O worshipful Ones, may we with our eyes see what is auspicious. May we live the entire length of our allotted life hale and hearty, offering our praises (unto Thee). May Indra, the ancient and the famous, Pooshan (Sun) the all knowing, the Lord of swift Motion (Vaayu) who saves us from all harms and Brihaspati who protects the spiritual wealth in us - bless us (with the intellectual strength to understand the scriptures and the heroic heart to follow the teachings.) When Sufi Rule 93 pleads, "only to listen to things which are beneficial", it does not completely identify itself with the Hindu concept of Sravana (recollecting again and again what was been told by the Guru) but it does prepare the way no doubt.

Sufi Rule 94 commands that the "sight should be used to achieve understanding God's omnipotence and it should not be tainted with the desires of the soul." Bible also is against heneious and dirty looks directed against a person. Vaishnava scriptures pleads eloquently for the use of such 'searches' for the attainment of God and God only. We are also told of experiences of seers and saints to whom even the sight of ordinary everyday things and happenings (of the common man) became Godly and His glory. As such, once Sri Ramakrishna's father Khudiram was going to another village on duty as a priest and on the way he saw a 'vilva' tree full of green leaves. The sight of those lovely green leaves (said to be very

dear to Lord Shiva) aroused within his heart a great spiritual feeling that he stopped there and then only, collected the leaves and worshipped Lord Shiva: Once Sri Ramakrishna was passing through a town which was famous for its earthen pots which form a part of the musical instrument known as mridangam, used in the singing of Kirtans (songs and lyrics in praise of Lord and His glories) are made. The very sight of these earthen parts and the thought that they were used in praising Lord and His glories sent the Master into a deep trance. Sri Chaitanya Deva once while in an intoxicated mood filled with love of God plunged into the ocean, not knowing that it was an ocean but because the blue colour of the sea water resembled the complexion of Lord Krishna. It is said that St.Augustine embraced and dashed against many rocks again and again since he was under the hypnotic spell in the belief that the Lord had hid himself behind one of those rocks in a playful mood. It is narrated that a tree known as 'Tamal' has somewhat green-black trunk with a crown of green leaves and this tree was mistaken to be 'Krishna' by many a devotee in the meadows of Vrindavan. Stressing the importance of being aware of the physical influences, Sri Ramakrishna said:"The rishis of old attained the knowledge of Brahman. One cannot have this so long as there is the slightest trace of worldliness.....They kept their minds aloof from the objects of sight, hearing, touch and other things of wordly nature. Only thus did they realize Brahman as their own inner consciousness. (Gospel page 103)

So ultimately, one can dare say that everything is due to a feeling in the heart. In every scripture whether it is Upanishads, Gita or Bible there is this stress on heart, so also Sufi Rule 95 says: "There is a piece of meat in the body; if it is good, the whole body is good and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt; that is the heart." So behind every look, every act of hearing and speech there is this heart and ultimately though it is thus symbolically expressed, it is not the physical heart, that is behind everything but the mind. Mind is the greatest deterrence to the spiritual life but at the same time also the only gateway to it. When the heart and mind are perfectly tuned all other limbs are bound to co-ordinate with each other as well as with it. Sri Ramakrishna said:"...the heart of the devotee is the abode of God. He dwells no doubt in all things, but He especially manifests Himself in the heart of the devotee. A landlord may at one time or another visit all parts of his estate, but people say he is generally to be

found in a particular drawing room. The heart of the devotee is the drawing room of God."

Therefore in the Sufi Rule 96 it is said: "The ethics of the hand" is supposed "to give charity and serve the brethren and not use them in acts of disobedience" And according to Rule 97: " The ethics of the legs is not to walk in arrogance and not to use them in acts of disobedience."

Every devoted Hindu is always very fond of dedicating all his activities to Lord and His glories and there is a song of which Sri Ramakrishna was very fond and in which it is said: even in lying down let there be a feeling of prostrating before the Lord in all humality, while walking arround let there be the feeling of circumambulating the Divine Mother, while eating let there be the feeling that the food is being offered - Ahuti to Jatara Agni etc.etc. All the activities of Sri Ramakrishna are perfectly co-ordinated with this song.

Describing a realised person, the saint of Dakshineswar said: "Now and then I reflect on these ideas and find that I do not like them. In the beginning of spiritual life a man should think about sin and how to get rid of it." This person is no longer interested viewing things in an individual manner, his vision has gained the capacity to observe everything universally, virtue and vice, happiness and sorrow have no particular meaning to him - It is just like thinking limb-wise - about the conduct of the hand and the leg, ear and the eyes etc. "But when through the grace of God, devotion and ecstatic love are awakened in his heart then he altogether forgets virtue and sin. Then he leaves the scriptures and the injunctions far behind. Thoughts of repentence and penance do not bother him at all....The heart is a splendid place. One can meditate there or in the Sahasrara. These are the rules for meditation given in the scriptures. But you may meditate wherever you like. Every place is filled with Brahman Consciousness. Is there any place where It does not exist? Narayana, in Vali's presence, covered with two steps the heavens, the earth and the interspace. Is there any place left uncovered by god? A dirty place is as holy as the bank of the Ganges. It is said that the whole creation is the Virat, the Universal Form of God." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Page 403).

And finally like the Sufis, Sri Ramakrishna also believed in the ultimate importance of heart (Love) and the inter-connection of all other limbs like the eyes (sight), ears (hearing) etc.etc. Talking about legs and hands, he was of the opinion that such limbs by themselves are not of much importance when compared to heart (here mind). When a devotee despaired: "Sir, our legs are in chains, we cannot go forward" His immediate reply was: "What if the legs are chained? The important thing is the mind. Bondage is of the mind and freedom also is of the mind." Many are the instances when the master made this point very clear as when sighting Shivanath (Acharya Shivanath Shastri of the Brahmo Samaj) he exclaimed: "Ah, Here is Shivanath: You see, you are a devotee of God. The very sight of you gladdens my heart." Referring to the necessity of co-ordination between various limbs amongst themselves and their final co-ordination with the mind the Master compared it to a drama to be enacted on the stage. Comparing it to a theatrical performance where friendly relations are of utmost importance he said: "Have a friendly relationship with one another. That will be for your good and make you all happy. In the theatre the performance goes well only if the musicians sing with one voice. And that also gladdens the hearts of the audience." (Gospel page 440).

Sufis in general were very wary about the choice of companions and companionship. Broadly speaking they are not very open and informal contrary to the common notion that they are a soft type of people who always keep their doors and hearts wide open as is evident from Rule No.98 which states: "The first stage of companionship (Subha) acquaintance, then friendship, then familiarity, then intimacy, then companionship and, then only brotherhood." Though Rule 99 prohibits "borrowing, lending, competition, rivialry and slandering," amongst the brotherhood and further declares that "each of them should be son to the older, brother to the equal, father to the younger and slave to the master."

Regarding the precedence to be given Rule 100 states that: "(a) priority should be given first according to the learning and then (b) according to the seniority (Hadith) and (c) priority is also deserved by those who have met eminent Shaykhs" The highest honour after their leader Shaykh is given to the person who does highest service (KHIDMA) for it is said that "the chief of a people is their servant." Swami Vivekananda

also said that"....those who serve the servants of God are HIS greatest servants" and that the leader must be ready to give his life to the people and serve them with humility and not rule them with pride.

What are the main qualities to look for when developing a companionship? Sufi Rule 101 advises:"....when you associate with a man, you should pay attention to his intellect more than his theological doctrines" and "should not befriend a man who is primarily concerned with worldly goods." Similarly Sri Ramakrishna always preferred to be in the company of those whom he regarded as more intellectual and highly spiritual, for once, when amongst people who were not spiritually equal to him he said:" Mother, why have You brought me here? They are hedged around and not free. Can I free them?" He did not mind being with people of different caste for he believed that "...the light of the gas-lamp illuminates various localities with varying intensity, but the sustenance of light, namely, the gas, comes from one common store. So the religious teachers of all lands and of all ages are but so many lamps through which the light of the Spirit streams constantly from the one almighty source." (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, page 150.) However he could never tolerate the company of wordly people who were always busy with the acquisition of wordly goods and name and fame. For him" the fettered ones - the worldlings are never awakened. How sorrows assail them, how frauds deceive them, and how dangers threaten them: Yet they do not 'wake up', even as the camel, so fond of the prickly bush and the nettle, does not cease browsing on them though they make its mouth bleed. The man of the world suffers so much, yet in a few forgets everything..." (Ibid page 80)

Regarding the types of people who can be befriended and would become true companions the Sufis have a saying : "Men are of three kinds: One, like food, is indispensable; another like medicine, you may need occasionally, and still another, like disease you should try to avoid." Sufi Rule 104 corroborates this saying. Sri Ramakrishna while speaking on this said:"If you are in bad company, then you will talk and think like your companions. On the otherhand when you are in the company of devotees, you will think and talk of God". Even amongst the devotees he categorised them into three types: The man who worships from the very depth of the heart without the least ostentation or vanity is a Sattvic worshipper. The man who gives much attention to decorating his house, makes much fuss

about music and dancing and makes all costly and elaborate arrangements for a rich feast when celebrating the worship of Diety, is a Rajastic worshipper. The man who immolates hundreds of innocent goats and sheep on the altar, has dishes of meat and wine for offerings, and is absorbed only in dancing and singing while conducting worship is a Tamasic worshipper." (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, Page 92)

Now coming to the subject of travelling, undertaking a pilgrimage and visiting brother monks in other places Sufi Rule 105 lays-down three guide lines: "...should not prepare food for the trip, should not plan his way or try to estimate it, and finally he should know that God guards him" The Sufis have an order of priority for the purpose of travelling: " First Holy War, then pilgrimage; then to visit the Prophet's tomb.... Next comes travelling in search of learning." Later the Sufis also added another purpose and that is social visit or visits amongst the brotherhood. It is also said that Prophet was of the opinion that "God affirms His love for those who love one another for His sake and who visit one another for His sake" there by restricting the purpose of travel for the 'sake of Him only'. Parivarjana or travel is an important aspect in all spiritual life. Learning of course, is the main idea behind all 'Parivraja' of the Sannyasin and it is also said, in a general way that learning is not at all complete without some travelling. Interestingly Parivrajana and love amongst the brotherhood are the preponderant and prominent aspects amongst the Ramakrishna brotherhood. Sri Ramakrishna attached little importance to pilgrimages etc. for he said: " What is the use of making pilgrimages if you can attain love of God remaining where you are? I have been to Benares and noticed the same trees there as here. The same green tamarind-leaves. Pilgrimage becomes futile if it does not enable you to attain love of God..." (Gospel, Page 469)

Rule 106 continues: " Then to repair past wrongs and to ask forgiveness" in and through exchange of visits is also regarded as one of the purposes of travel. Further, it says, "To learn the stories of the past (tradition), that they may serve as an example (in different places and Sampradayas/Sects). Also, self-discipline (to tame the the desirous soul) and learn from hardship, and as well to achieve anonymity." It may be recalled here that even the great Swami Vivekananda also had travelled in anonymity throughout the length and breadth of India.

Travelling towards the God is the main purpose of pilgrimage according to Sri Ramakrishna but he also agreed that visiting of holy places etc. did have a sobering effect on certain types of people. So he said:" How long, does a bee buzz around? So long as it is not sitting on a flower. But it will not do for the sadhaka to renounce duties. He should perform his duties, such as worship, japa, meditation, prayer and pilgrimage."(Gospel page 111) Who are the people who benefit most from these? He explained: There are two classes of yogis, the Vahudakas and the Kutichakas. The Vahudakas roam about visiting various holy places and have not yet found peace of mind. But the Kutichakas, having visited all the sacred places have quietened their minds. Feeling serene and peaceful, they settle down in one place and no longer move about. In that one place they are happy, they do not feel the need of going to any sacred place. If one of them ever visits a place of pilgrimage., it is only for the purpose of new inspiration."

Sufis in their Rule 107 declared that:" The Sufi should not travel for amusement, vanity, ostentation or to seek wordly things.....and nothing is more injurious to the novices than to travel in the pursuit of their caprice." Sufis never liked the life of a vagabond nor approved of it. Unfortunately there is a common notion that they are mostly peripatetic and aimless in their travel.Nothing can be further than this from the truth since travelling without the consent and permission of ones parents is prohibited, so also one has to obtain the consent of the master for the travel, one is not to travel in a hectic manner but should prefer walking to riding and to walk in a slow pace like the weakest and stop whenever ones friend or co-traveller stops and should serve his companions as much as possible are some of the guidelines prescribed. Further while travelling, no Sufi should miss the prayer-schedule or the timings and a Sufi traveller should always prefer to stay if there is a Shaykh or a meeting place for the Sufis in that place or township nearby, and should always prefer to stay near a place where water is available for the rituals and drinking. Unfortunately if there is such place near about, he should try to find out whether there is anybody nearby who has somekind of love or admiration for the Sufis and take shelter with them. It is also very clearly stated that "In conversation the Sufi should not ask about wordly affairs but about the Shayakhs, the companions and brethren alone".

Sri Ramakrishna also laid great stress on the type of companions one should have while at home or travelling; according to him: "There are three classes of Sadhana - Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic. In the Sattvic sadhana the devotees call on the Lord with great longing and simply repeat HIS name; he does not seek any results in return. The Rajasic sadhana prescribes many rituals: purascharana pilgrimage, panchatapa, worship with sixteen articles and so forth.

Asked about the efficacy of holy company, pilgrimage, fasting etc., the Master confirmed in a very asserting manner that these are all helpful and effective to certain section of the people. He said: "Yes it is possible. But not for a confirmed scoundrel. A sannyasi's kamandulu, made of bitter gourd, travels with him to the four great places of pilgrimage but still does not lose its bitterness." (Gospel, page 225). Yet he agreed that, "At the begining of spiritual life the devotee should observe such rites as pilgrimage, putting a string of beads around neck and so forth. But outward ceremonies gradually drop off as he attains the goal, the vision of God. Then his only activity is the repetition of God's name and contemplation and meditation on HIM." As if questioning himself he said: "They make so many pilgrimages and repeat the name of God so much, but why do they not realize anything? It is because they have no longing for God. God reveals Himself to the devotee if only he calls upon Him with a longing heart." (Gospel P. 305/306) Talking about the wandering monks and the troubles they have to undergo he said: "Wandering monks, while searching for 'sadavrata' (an eating place where food is supplied free to monks and beggars) may have to go six miles out of their way. I have seen them travelling along the regular road after their pilgrimage to Puri and making a detour to find an eating place. Pilgrimage becomes futile if it does not enable you to attain love of God. Love of God is one essential and necessary thing. Do you know the meaning of 'kites and vultures'? There are people who talk big and who say that they have performed most of the duties enjoined in the scriptures. But with all that their minds are engrossed in wordliness and deeply pre-occupied with money, riches, fame, creature-comforts and such things." (Ibid pages 411 and 469)

Pilgrimage as interpreted by Sri Ramakrishna comes under Karma-yoga: "There are two kinds of Yoga: mono-yoga, karma-yoga. To perform following the Guru's instructions, such pious acts as worship,

pilgrimage and service to the living being is called karma-yoga. The duties that Janaka performed are also called Karma-yoga. The meditation and contemplation of the yogis is called mano-yoga.' (Ibid. Page 696)

Sufis in their thoroughness in religious matters have even prescribed not only what one should carry for physical needs but also the mental attitude necessary for the travel. These are all contained in Rules 112-120. A Sufi should have a leather container or a jug for water and sufficient mental preparation for the hardships he may encounter enroute. In this regard Abu Yakub al-Suse says: "The traveller must have four things, and if not he should not travel. These are (1) religious learning ('ilm) to direct him, (2) scrupulosity to restrain him,, (3) moral character to preserve him and (4) certitude to carry him". And the subsequent rule 114 says regarding a Sufi-traveller's dress that "Such people do not care what they wear.... Whatever a Sufi wears is nice on him and he will look elegant and dignified in it."

Sri Ramakrishna was also very simple in what he wore and never possessed more than a pair of clothing. "It was the beginning of winter, Sri Ramakrishna had felt the need of some shirts and had asked M to bring them. Besides two broadcloth shirts, M had brought another of a heavy material, for which Sri Ramakrishna had not asked for.

Master (to M.)' You had better take that one back with you. You can use it yourself. There is nothing wrong in that. Tell me, what kind of shirt did I ask you to bring?'

M: 'Sir, you told me to get you plain ones. You didn't ask me to buy the heavier one.'

Master: "Then please take that one back...You see, Dwarika Babu gave me a shawl. The Marwari devotees also brought me one. I couldn't accept."

Sufis also attached great importance to austerity and considered those who practised severely simple life as great personages. It is said that according to a prophet's saying: "There are three such types who will enter paradise without accounting: (a) a man who, when he is washing his garment, has no other one, (b) a man who has no more than one pot on his fireplace and (c) a man, when he asks for a drink, is not asked 'what kind of drink you want.' Aisha said once that: "Prophet never prepared

two of anything." According to the Prophet: "Cleanliness is part of faith because God detests an unclean person." Sufis also rejected conspicuous wearing of rich dresses and clothes. Once Sri Ramakrishna said: "A true devotee of God does not care for such things as wealth or health. he thinks: 'Why should I practise spiritual austerities for creature comforts, money, or name and fame? These are all impermanent. They last only for a day or two.' (Gospel page 286)

Lot of ethics is involved in the manner of eating and storing food among the Sufis just like amongst the Hindus. It is suggested that (a) one should give the poor to eat from what one is eating and everything should be taken in the name of God. In this connection Gita also says: "Consuming the daily food regularly is obligatory on all including the enlightened: but the latter convert eating itself into Jnana-yajna. The food, the eater of it, the digestion - all these are mere modification of Brahman even as the waves are of the sea. The one established in brahmavastha in this wise attains Brahman" (The Bhagvad Gita, Chap.4, Sloka 24). Neither did the Sufis liked the seeking, gathering and storing, since it is believed that Prophet disliked storing anything for tomorrow. Sufi Rule 122 warns: One should not take much food because that will be gluttony: and according to what the Prophet has said: "Food should be taken like medicine, gluttony should be avoided.....one should not praise it (food) nor should one find fault in it...Dissolve your food by reciting God's name (Dhikar Allah) and by prayer and do not go to sleep right after the meal lest your heart becomes hardened."

Regarding the time spent on the process of eating Sufis seem to be much concerned for Rule 123 says: "Sufis should not have a set time for eating" and Rule 128 says that"....time is too precious to be spent on mere eating". Rule 124 says that one is to eat in company and eat slowly along with the group." Much stress is laid on cleanliness which is remarkable and says: "they should not make much ado about it (food) and should not prefer plenty of food which is unclean to little which is clean. (Quran 18:19) They should not feed each other nor should anyone of them say to the other 'Eat' except the Shaykh, who may do so to those below his rank in order to cheer them up and encourage them to overcome their shyness. However the custom of the common people is to bring forth the food and invite those who are present there to eat." Although the latter

portion of the rule is a common features in many religions including Hinduism, but the privilege of the Shaykh or any such superior on the insistence or non- insistence by others on eating is not so universal. As a result it has become a habit for each one to insist on the other to eat more, so much so that it has gained the position of pestering each other. This is a very common experience in any sadhu congregation since feeding of the sadhus has come to be regarded as a very holy act specially in India.

Another rule, Rule 124 is almost universal amongst all religious although it has undergone many changes thereby losing the spirit of the rule. The rule says that "Sufis eat only food whose source they know. They avoid eating the food of unjust and sinful people. A Hadith says:"The Prophet forbade us to accept an invitation to dinner by any sinful person" Sri Ramakrishna also could not even touch the food prepared by an impure person. His disciple Swami Vivekananda used to say:"Certain regulations as to food are necessary, we must use that food which brings us the purest mind.....Pure food brings pure mind and in a pure mind is a constant memory of God.....All exciting food should be avoided and pure food, no doubt, helps pure thought it has an intimate connection: both ought to be there."

Swami Vivekananda has discussed this subject of pure and impure food in detail in Bhakti Yoga. However there is general notion amongst the sadhus that which is MADHUKARI (food which is procured by begging) the purity of which cannot be questioned at all. While replying to a question by a devotee as to whether one should eat what one gets, Sri Ramarishna said:"That depends on the spiritual state. In the path of Jnana it produces no harm. When a Jnani eats, he offers the food as an oblation in the fire of Kundalini. But for a Bhakta, it is different. A Bhakta should eat only pure food such, food as he can freely offer to his beloved Lord.At the same time I must say that if a man loves God even while living upon pork, he is blessed; and wretched is he who lives on milk and rice or on Havisyana (unspiced food) but whose mind is absorbed in 'woman and gold'." (Sayings of Ramakrishna page 131)

The decorum to be followed while eating is of great importance to a Sufi: it is said that "Sufis do not disapprove of conversation during the meal *but certain formalities have to be followed such as: "Eating with brethren should be with informality (inbisat): with foreigners with nice

manners; and with the poor (fiquera) with altruism." Junayad said: "Eating together is like being nursed together, so you should carefully consider the persons with whom you eat." May be eating is not that individualistic in Islam. So the question of eating in compliance with one's desire has very little to do with group-eating. Feeding some guest or other is also highly commendable amongst the Sufis. Sri Ramakrsihna was in favour of feeding people according to their health, needs and likes and dislikes. May be his views were influenced by his own poor health which required constant and delicate nursing. He often used to advocate his opinion by saying "....the mother knows what food suits the stomachs of her different children. Can all of them digest pilau and kalia? Suppose a fish has been procured. The mother doesn't give pilau and Kalia to all the children. For the weak child with a poor stomach she prepares simple soup....." (Gospel, page 673) In another instant he said very clearly"..... a man should be given food according to his power of digestion".

In general, Sri Ramakrishna's views about food agrees well with the Sufi rules specially when he said "Egotism, sleep, gluttony, lust, anger and the like are the traits of people with tamas." Hindus also like the Sufi like group-eating on festivals and celebrations. Sri Ramakrishna also refers to 'Annakuta' festival where mounds of rice is prepared and shared with one and all." The conversation turned to the Annakuta festival of the Marwaris. Master: 'What you can have seen here, one sees in Vrindavan too. Rakhal has been seeing the same thing there. But the mounds of food at Vrindavan is higher and more people gather there....." (Gospel page 642). The difference between this group-eating amongst the Hindus and Muslims is that in Islam they share the food from the same container or plate amongst the family members or in a society collectively and do not attach much importance to who touches the food. May be this is to emphasise equality amongst all. Similar to Sufi Rule 124, the Master was also very careful as to who cooked the food, specially he warned against eating in the company of bad people with qualities like anger, lust and gluttony. He told his devotees why he was scared of such people: " One day Bhavanath, Rakhal and some other youngsters had cooked their own meal in temple garden. They were sitting at their meal when a Baul (wondering minstrel) arrived, sat down with them and said he wanted to eat with them. I said that there was not enough food; if anything was left

it would be kept for him. He became angry and left. On the Vijaya day a man allows anyone and everyone to feed him with his own hand. It is not good. But one can eat food from the hand of a devotee who is pure in heart". As such he tells that when a gate-keeper of a richman had offered him some custard-apple to eat in great devotion he had taken it and appreciated the offer very much. About being careful about the people with whom you share your meal Sufi Rule 126 quotes Junayad as saying: "Eating together is like being nursed together, so you should carefully consider the persons with whom you eat." The Master of Dakshineswar was also very particular about the intentions of people who came to him bringing presents, food etc. for he said:"As certain person comes here, but I can't eat any food that he brings. He works in an office at a salary of twenty rupees and earns another twenty by writing false bills. I can't utter a word in his presence, because he tells lies, Sometimes he stays here 2/3 days without going to his office. Can you guess his purpose? It is that I should recommend him to someone for a job somewhere else." (Gospel Page 130)

Sufi Rule 122 discourages anyone from seeking, gathering and storing anything including food. Sri Ramakrishna was also of the same opinion for he said"I can't carry anything with me, neither food, nor even a betel-leaf: for that means laying up for the future. I can't carry even a little clay in my hand." Again one day:"The Master noticed that M had brought some clothes for him. M. had with him two pieces of unbleached and two pieces of washed cloth. But the Master had asked him only for the unbleached ones. He said to M 'Give me the unbleached ones. You can keep the others. All right. You may give me one of them'

M. Then shall I take back one piece?"

Master :Then take both'.

M : 'As you please Sir'.

Master : You can give me those when I need them. You see, yesterday Beni Pal wanted me to carry away some food for Ramlal. I told him I couldn't. It is impossible for me lay up for the future." (Ibid page 642)

For Sri Ramakrishna more than the external show of cleanliness the inner cleanliness and holiness of the thing offered and the person offering it mattered more, and he used to say of persons who "earn money

by falsehood, I can't eat their offerings" And as if in support he quoted: "Nanak once said,' I was about to eat food of unholy people, when I found it is stained with blood.' A man should offer only pure things to holy men. He should not give them food earned by dishonest means." (Gospel P. 162). Talking about some people's obsession about giving alms he said:"People who carry to excess the giving of alms or the distribution of food among the poor, fall victims to the desire of acquiring name and fame."(Ibid page 142).

Then to the question raised as to how the sadhus will get their food and requirements if people were discouraged from feeding the sadhus and giving alms, Sri Ramakrishna explained:"There are three classes of Sadhus:good, mediocre and bad. The good sadhu makes no effort to get his food. The dandis, among others, belong to the mediocre and bad classes. To get food the mediocre sadhu will knock at the door of a house and say, 'Namo, Narayan'. The bad sadhu starts a quarrel if he doesn't get his alms. The good sadhu behaves like a python. He sits in one place and the food comes to him. The python doesn't move from where it is..." At this juncture some of the devotees remarked that since God provides food without any self effort they need not put in the efforts to which the Master replied:"But those who think that an effort is needed must make the effort."

Why did Sri Ramakrishna give so much importance and made so many remarks about food? Because he knew that in Kali-yuga: "man being totally dependent on food for life, cannot altogether shake off the idea that he is the body. In this state of mind it is not proper for him to say 'I am HE'. When a man does all sorts of worldly things, he should not say. 'I am Brahman.'" The Master used to love observing the nature and behaviour of sadhus in particular: "I loved to visit free-eating places being maintained for holy-men and the poor, and would watch them for hours" and according to him they were of various types - those who" after eating a tasty morsel removes every trace of it by wiping his face carefully with a towel, lest anyone should know. Another, again, having got a mango, not enjoys it himself but shares it with others." (Ibid Page 857).

Sufi Rules 131 and 132 concerns sleep and its effect on a God seeker. Rule 131 says that"the Prophet disapproved of prolonged sleep and Rule 132 tells how to make use of sleep in the final search: "The Sufi

should strive to make his sleep for God or in God and not away from God." First of all, "He who sleeps for God is that person who wants to strengthen himself by his sleep for the performance of the ritual duties (FARAID) and the super-erogatory prayers (NAWAFIL). The nawafil are particularly efficacious in the latter part of the night." The second type of person is he "who sleeps in God is the ARIF (Knower) who is occupied by the remembrance of God and is not overtaken by sleep or slumber, and he would sleep only when sleep comes to him and by his own choice." The third and the lowest is "... he who sleeps away from God is the one who is heedless of HIM." Sufi Rule 133 asks the aspirant to sleep on the right side and recommended siesta to enable one to stay awake during the night. Sufis usually do not like to sleep in the beginning of the day, at the middle and at the closing of the day, that is to say just after the prayers and condemned such a habit as clumsiness. Swami Vivekananda recognising the need for a short of spell of rest during the afternoons in a tropical country like India recommended siesta in the Belur Math Rules.

Sri Ramakrishna himself did not favour too much sleeping and as such he used to chalk out programmes of sadhana for his young disciples which involved going out to solitary places at different hours of the night for meditation etc. He even chastised some of them for sleeping long hours; once he scolded Latu Maharaj (one of his favourite disciples) so much that it is said that Latu Maharaj used to weep and pray by covering himself fully sometimes, throughout the night through all his life. The Master used to narrate often the high state of divine intoxication of Sri Chaitanya who it is said used to forget his body even: "He also forgets his own body, which is so dear to all. Chaitanya had this intoxication. He plunged into the ocean not knowing that it was the ocean. He dashed himself again and again on the ground. He was not aware of hunger, of thirst or of sleep." (Gospel Page 425).

Sri Ramakrishna who used to experience such state of intoxication narrated: "Ah, what a state I passed through: Sleep left me completely." Carried away by this state of ecstasy he used to sing songs which described his state:

My sleep is broken, how can I slumber any more?
For now I am wide awake in the sleeplessness of yoga,

O Divine Mother, make me one with Thee in yoga-sleep atlast,
My slumber I have lulled asleep for ever more,
A man has to come to me from a country where there is no night
Rituals and devotions have all grown profitless for me:

(Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page 863)

What is said in Sufi Rule 132 as to 'sleeping for God' may be the Sattvic quality of a devotee so well described by Sri Ramakrishna as: "His worship, charity and meditation are all done in secret, people do not know about them at all. He meditates in the mosquito curtain. People think he does not sleep well at night and for that he sleeps late in the morning." (Ibid page 630). Quite contrary are the Rajastic and Tamasic people: the latter always wants to be active, to be doing something and regarding such people (Rajasic) the Master told a group of people who had come to visit him in the noon and had applogised saying "We have disturbed your rest" to which Sri Ramakrishna said: "Oh, no what you say applies only to Rajasic man. About him people say, 'Ah, now he will enjoy his sleep.' And about Tamasic sleep, he told Keshab Sen once "Can't you sleep without the smell of your fish-basket? Once a Fishwife was a guest in the house of a gardener who raised flowers. She came there with her empty basket, after selling fish in the market, and was asked to sleep in a room where flowers were kept. But because of the fragrance of the flowers, she couldn't get to sleep for a long time. Her hostess saw her condition and said, 'Hello: Why are you tossing from side to side so restlessly?' The fishwife said: 'I don't know friend. Perhaps the smell of the flowers has been disturbing my sleep. Can you give me my fish basket? Perhaps that will put me to sleep.' The basket was brought to her She sprinkled water on it and set it near her nose. Then she fell asleep and snored all night." (Ibid. 434)

Whereas Sufi Rules lay great stress on the ethics of sleep, in Vedanta the psychology of sleep has been utilised as a great philosophy; as such "To Jnanis the walking state is no more real than the dream state" declared the Saint of Dakshineswar. Talking to Mahimacharan he once said: "In the light of the Vedantic reasoning the world is illusory, unreal as dream. The Supreme Soul is the witness - the witness of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. These things, are in your line of thought. The waking state is only as real as the dream." (Ibid page 651) The most

important point to be noted in any philosophy is that our anger, lust and all desires should be allowed to sleep excepting the pure ego, what Sri Ramakrishna preferred to call 'Pucca Ami', within us. When the spiritual journey is concluded successfully all the noise of this world and life is silenced. Drawing a parallel Sri Ramakrishna said: "When the meal is over, the guests retire to sleep and all is quiet." The nearer you come to God, the less you reason and argue. When you finally attain HIM, then all sounds - all reasoning and disputing come at an end. Then you go into samadhi - the deep sleep - into communion with God in silence.

Having discussed sleep in detail let us see what Sufis have to say about the proper and improper way of sitting. It is well known that they do not like improper way of sitting and it is said that once when "Abu Yazid (a Bistami) once stretched out his leg in his cell, a heavenly voice announced to him: "He who sits in the presence of royalty without good manners (bila-adab) risks being executed." Vaisnavas too specially the traditionalists consider improper sitting as an offence.

The beloved Master of Swami Vivekananda was also very particular about the niceties of proper postures under different situations; narrating one of his experiences and how he tactfully rectified it, he said: ".....I visited him (Keshab Sen) at his house in Colootola Street. Hriday was with me. We were shown into the room where Keshab was working. He was writing something. After a long while he put aside his pen, got off his chair, and sat on the floor with us. But he didn't salute us or show us respect in any other way. He used to come here now and then. One day in a spiritual mood I said to him" 'One should not sit before a sadhu with one leg over the other. That increases ones Rajas.' As soon as he and his friend would arrive, I would salute them before they bowed to me. Thus they gradually learnt to salute a holy man, touching the ground with their foreheads." (Ibid page 433)

The attitude of Sufis in general towards music and recitation and the rules concerning them are also very interesting. It is said that the Prophet said: "God did not listen to anything as he listened to Dhikr (something like Bhajans) recitation by a prophet who has a nice voice." Sri Ramakrishna endowed with a nice voice for singing God's glories not only went into ecstasy whenever he sang, he also used to cry and dance according to the feelings depicted in the songs and the emotions he felt

within himself, sometimes he used to invite the devotees too, to join him in the singing and dancing. He often used to comment that:"There is a special manifestation of God's power in a man who has any outstanding gift, such as proficiency in music'. Similarly it is reported in the Quran that while the quran was recited before him the Prophet used to cry and weep. (Quran 73:12, 4:41) According to Rule 136:"SAMA (recitation of a kind of prayer sung very much like Bhajans and Kirtans) is a truthful inspiration which stirs the heart towards the truth, so he who listens to it in a truthful manner will realise the truth, while he who listens to it with lower-soul will go asunderSAMA stirs or reveals that which is in the heart". And "SAMA is beneficial to him whose heart is alive and whose lower soul is dead....SAMA is a slippery stone on which only the feet of the learned men can stand firmly." Here, learned meaning Jnani, mature in spiritual life. The same thing is said about the emotional type of Kirtans in Hinduism which has the potentiality of rousing passion if it is not God-oriented and God-wardly.

May be this is the reason why Sufi Rule 138 states:" It is not one of their rules not to behave in an affected manner in the SAMA and not to have a fixed time for it. They should not listen for the purpose of enjoying or diverting themselves. They should listen to such things that will prompt them to pious actions and will rejuvenate their aspirations." Swami Vivekananda was for this rejuvenation of ones aspirations. To him music should not only inspire - it should give strength to the mind. Sri Ramakrishna ofcourse was not at all bothered about all this. He sang mainly from a genuine inspiration kindled by the love of God and his songs were full of devotion specially to Mother Kali.

Sufis were also very careful as to the contents of the songs for Abu Amr B.Nuyayd is reported to have said:"To make one mistake in SAMA is worse than to slander people for years," (Rule 138). In Vedic chanting also great care is taken about the pronunciation of each and every word. Sri Ramakrishna also did not like any mistakes to be committed while singing the devotional songs whether in the words or tunes; however his reaction was not so severe as the Sufi Rule 138. Neither did he like the frequent tuning of the instruments before or during a recital for he believed that this fastidiousness for technicalities would be at the cost of the devotion and eagerness of a person to listen to something inspiring and

soothing to the heart. That is to say that he cared more for a sincere and hearty performance than to a technical display and perfectionism.

Swami Vivekananda, although an ardent devotee of the Master, did not perhaps like the ostentatious display of emotion in Bhajans and Kirtans. According to him, it is a kind of weakness leading may be to some nervous disease. He desired restrain and a complete balance between one's personality and the music and dancing of his choice. One may even dare to call him Platonic on this topic and he even censured the exhuberance of the Vaishnavas now and then. He remarked that "Music is the highest art and, to those who understand, is the highest worship."

Regarding ecstasy Sufi Rule 139 states:"It is improper to induce deliberately the state of ecstasy or to constrain oneself to rise up (to dance)" Meirier, the German author in his book: 'Asiatische Studien' has said "In theory, dancing was acceptable only as a result of ecstasy but not as an inducement to it." It is very true that no religion allows ecstasy is to induce dancing, but dancing being the result of ecstasy universally accepted, nevertheless there is lot of confusion arising out of this no doubt. Sri Ramakrishna never used it as an inducement but only as a release-expression and often it looked as if he was goaded by it. It was definitely an effect but never a cause. Sufi Rule 139 also says:"Except if one is overcome by ecstasy or in order to help by way of solidarity, a fellow who is in a state of ecstasy. One may also do this by way of cheering himself without pretending to be intoxicated or effecting ecstasy, but it is better to avoid this". Rule 140 discouraged it altogether for the young people and mentions the death of a disciple of Junayd in rapture.

Rule 141, discourages completely such participation in dancing with ecstasy but says: ".....yet to keep the heart attentive, is better than constrained participation in the dance because this is the occasion of stability" Here this word 'stability' comes nearer to the word, Samadhi' and to which we will be referring to after a few paras as to how Sri Ramakrishna considered 'samadhi' as a kind of stability or sleep into God.

Sufis neither liked erotic type of songs, poems and literature nor any kind of erotic descriptions were justified for Rule 143 says: "It is disapproved for the murid to listen to love poems and erotic descriptions. Only the knower (arif) can properly practice SAMA" Junayad also says:"If a novice is attracted to Sama, you can know that there is still in him a

reminder of falseness" Why so much caution is advocated towards the SAMA? Rule 143 clarifies: "The SAMA is (like the) Sirat bridge, it may lead some to the loftiest heights and throw others to the lowest depths. The SAMA is more suitable for Shyakhs than for novices." And may be for this reason Rule 144 adds: "A person who smiles or amuses himself should not be present at a SAMA session" Although followers of Ramakrishna tradition may not agree fully to this strict censoring since they make allowance to some kind of natural relaxations, Swami Vivekananda did not very much like the cheap although popular Vaishnava erotic type of Kirtanas. More or less the views of Swami Vivekananda were similar to Rule 145 of the Sufis which says: "Each mental faculty enjoys something in the SAMA: the heart words of wisdom; the spirit melody; the lower soul the mention of sensual pleasures which suits the nature."

Regarding the intensity of the emotions, distinguishing between 'WAJD' and 'TAWAJUD' roughly meaning enjoying ecstasy, weeping or trying to weep atleast Rule 146 quotes the Prophet as saying : "When you see people suffering you should weep and if you do not weep, then try to weep." By this it is clear that this weeping is a kind of expression of the heart atleast. Swami Vivekananda used to say that one's head should ache, or brain should reel before undertaking some kind of 'service' for the suffering people or for the country. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "Cry for the Lord with an intense yearning heart and you will certainly see HIM. People shed a whole jug of tears for wife and children. They swim in tears for money. But who weeps for God? Cry to HIM with a real cry" (Gospel page 83.)

But who are these people who really cry for the God? According to Sufi Rule 147 they are of three categories: (1) Those inspired persons directly in communication with the Reality in some form or other (2) Those who are inspired through different kinds of experiences and various media indirectly and (3) the Faqura type who have entirely detached themselves from wordly things. The rule also it seems has very low opinion of people who need some outside help to stir up their spiritual feeling for it says:"...how low is the state, if the person who needs some one to stir him! Upon my life, a bereaved mother does not need a mourner." Many may not appreciate the above statement in the rule since it is not very practical. Sometimes such help and boosting is very essential and important in

spiritual life and also very useful. Talking about sincere devotees Sri Ramakrishna opined: "Some souls realize Goal without practising any spiritual discipline. They are called nitya-siddha, eternally perfect. Those who have realised God through austerity, Japa and the like are called sadhana-siddha, perfect through spiritual discipline. Again there are those called kripasiddha, perfect through divine grace. This last may be compared to a room kept dark a thousand years, which becomes lighted the moment a lamp is brought in." (Ibid. page 483).

No doubt there are rules on the arbitrary nature or the power of ecstasy and also rules concerning marriage etc. since these are not very relevant in this present paper let us by-pass them and move on to the ethics of begging. The rules covering this controversial subject of begging are somewhat akin to the Hindu principles of 'PARIGRAHA' and 'APARIGRAHA' specially regarding the Hindu practice of 'MADHUKARI' (alms of begging) of which it speaks of approvingly like: "It is better to eat by begging than by asking for hospitality" According to Rule 159: "in illness there are benefits which the intelligent man should not ignore; a purging of sin, an opportunity to deserve the reward for forbearance, an awakening from heedlessness, a reminder of God's favour in the state of health, a renewal of repentence and an inducement to give charity." One Shaykh said: "I would rather be healthy and thank Allah then be afflicted and endure." All religions stress the need for a healthy body for spiritual excellence. There is a saying in Sanskrit which stresses the importance of good health and declares that it is the first step to a religious/spiritual life without which it is almost impossible to achieve anything specially in the spiritual field. Swami Vivekananda also said that "we must not forget that health is only a means to an end and that consciously or unconsciously, health can be transmitted". (Complete Works, Part I page 139) Talking about the benefits even sickness bestow upon a devoted person or a group of persons it is very often mentioned that Sri Ramakrishna's fatal illness (he suffered from throat cancer) helped in the consolidation of a kind of brotherhood amongst his disciples who were mostly young men just out of college or still in college. Their Master's illness and the manner in which he bore it and the personal service they were able to give to their spiritual Master no doubt proved an occasion good enough to create an affectionate bondage and responsible

brotherhood which stood the most challenging days and years that followed after Sri Ramakrishna's samadhi. How well Ali.b. Sahl has said: "Do you believe that I will die like those sick people, I will be called and I shall respond" what a faith he had in his creator and in himself:

Everything is excellent as long as one is in pink of health. What if one is afflicted with something or the other, what should be one's attitude? For this Sufi Rule declares: "One must consider that the affliction is brought upon him by God and then one will not suffer the pain of it." It is also said: "He who relies on the choice of God does not wish anything for himself except whatever God may choose for him." One can quote the case of Sri Ramakrishna as the best example in this connection: Once Girish Ghosh who had lived a fast life once was in a repentent mood pleaded with the Master who was seriously ill with cancer to allow him to serve him for atleast one year - may be in the fond hope that with that promise he could make Sri Ramakrishna to live for one more year atleast. But the Master only told him: " Well that depends on God's will". A persistent Girish pestered the Master to plead with Divine Mother for his cure to which he replied "Leave me alone. I can't say those things. I can't ask the Divine Mother to cure my illness. All right, I shall be cured if it is the will of God.....Every now and then I think that the body is a mere pillow-case. The only real substance is the Indivisible Satchidananda. When I go into divine ecstasy this illness of the throat remains away from me...." (Gospel pages 842 & 847).

Yet inspite of all these, the Hadith and Rule 165 says: "God prefers a strong Muslim to a weak one:" Swami Vivekananda also very similarly had declared like that in favour of strong and powerful people with an equally strong faith and not any weaklings with no noble purpose in life. He said "Strength, strength, it is that we want so much in this life, for what we call sin and sorrow have all one cause and that is our weakness.....Be strong : Be brave. Strength is life. Weakness is death. Strength is goodness:weakness is sin. If there is one word that is coming out of the Upanishads like a bomshell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word fearlessness. Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. And the only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of fearlessness. It is fear that brings

misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil'. (VIVEKANANDA - His Gospel of manmaking. Page 28)

None can avoid afflictions, so it is better to ponder over the Sufi Rule which says: "Affliction for man is like tanning (to a hide): (for) it removes all his frivolities and brings him to state of usefulness." Junayd adds his approval by saying: "It (affliction) is a lamp for the knowers, an awakening for the novices and a destination for the heedless." Swami Vivekananda once said: "Pain has its uses: All misery and happiness - where is it? In the senses. It is the touch of the senses that cause pleasure and pain, heat and cold. If we can control the senses and order what they shall feel—not let them order us about as they are doing now—if they can obey our commands, become our servants, the problem is solved at once. We are bound by the senses; they play upon us, make fools of us all the time." (Complete Works: Part I page 516)

It is very common, specially in the spiritual field to make tall claims; claiming to have achieved super natural powers, performed miracles etc.etc. And it is also true that there are still gullible people who take these claims to be true. Ibn Ata, a Sufi saint said: "It is in times of trial that you can distinguish between false claims and true claims." Sri Ramakrishna never encouraged tall claims to be made and he warned his devotees: "Visit not miracle-mongers and those who claim occult powers. These men are stragglers from the path of Truth. Their minds have become entangled in psychic powers, which are like veritable meshes in the way of the pilgrim to Brahman." It is also claimed again that "there can be different purposes. For Ata says: "It may act as a purge of sins, as a means of moral education, as a trial or as a punishment and a sign of abandonment."

Now coming to the part IV of the Sufi Rules for the Novice (KITAB ADAB al-Muridin) which happens to be the concluding chapter we find it deals mostly with the various levels or states of religious and ethical attainment. No doubt Rule 166, in the very beginning itself warns about the pit-falls (rukhas) coming in the way of a person trying to reach the very depth of religion and the limited usefulness of mere externalities of religion. For it brands that the withdrawal from the (depth) of reality to the mere externalities of a religion is sure and definite sign of decline in the religious state of a person. It is the depth that matters, it is the sweet kernel of

religion whereas externalities are like the husk and chaff of the corn although they protect the inner core. Islam as a religion appears to be a very sensitive religion. The Sufis amongst the followers of Islam harp quite a lot on the internalities - the individualistic depth of the religion rather than in the broader interest of society and community. The rule said to be quoted from the Prophet lays down : "Whoever imitates a group of people in his manner of speech and dress while his acts are incompatible with his appearance, that person is accursed by Allah and the angels and by all men." It seems that the Sufis are very particular in this respect as they consider: "...this is necessary in order that he may follow the customs of the Sufis and be embellished by their embellishment, until he reaches the status and the states of those Sufis who attain to the Reality." Sri Ramakrishna always emphasised the goal of God realization; he often used to tell his devotees "First gain God and then gain wealth, but do not try to do the contrary. If, after acquiring spirituality you lead a wordly life, you will never lose your peace of mind....know the ONE, and you will know them all. Ciphers placed after the figure one get the value of hundreds and of thousands, but they become valueless if you wipe out the figure. The many ciphers have value only because of the ONE. First the ONE and then the many. First God, and then the Jivas and the Jagat." (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, page 28). And Swami Vivekananda went so far as to call it a grand persuasion of sectless sect, just to avoid this kind of false embellishment of group life and organisation. Organisation, he emphasised, but finally the goal must be an 'Azad' state, a boundless state in life mainly based on the individual realization and experience, no doubt.

Recognising human nature Sufi Rules have shown consideration and made allowance to social charity and organised life under certain circumstances and as such they cannot be accused of being universally uncompromising and totally individualistic. Many are the exceptions and allowances to Rules like where begging is allowed in times of dire need but to beg only as much as necessary and has emphatically declared that begging as such should never be a regular source of income.

Similarly certain exceptions in the following of Sama are allowed like joking and jesting, Sufi rules of conduct at the same time declares "It is improper, especially for persons of high rank, to do much jesting. Do not jest with a noble man lest he bear malice against you and do not jest with

a base person lest he behave impudently towards you" (based on Rule 175) Sri Ramakrishna warned all his devotees in general and one Vijayakrishna Goswami who was an acharya of the Brahmo Samaj for sometime that one must be careful about:"...an influential man who has much money and many men under his control. He can injure you if he wants, you must be careful while talking to him; perhaps you may have to approve what he says. Second, a dog. When it chases you or barks at you, you must stand still, talk to it gently and pacify it. Third, a bull. If it runs after you with lowered horns, you must calm it with a gentle voice. Fourth, a drunkard. If you arouse his anger, he will abuse you, naming fourteen generations of your family. You should say to him:'Hello uncle! How are you?' Then he will be mightily pleased and sit by you and smoke." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 560).

Sufis generally dislike making themselves conspicuous in their dress or indulge excessively in embellishing their torn or patched frock and other clothes. Sufi Rule advocates a middle path - not too much austerity nor too much ostentation and show. Sri Ramakrishna was also critical about the way some of the sadhus spent their time in discussing feasts and ceremonies they attended or in stitching too many clothes. Ramakrishna Order also has been asked by Swami Vivekananda to follow a middle path. There is a well known saying which says:" "The more a man's attachment to the world, the less he is likely to attain knowledge. The less his attachment to the world, the more is the possibility of his gaining knowledge" (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, page 139)

Sufi Rules seem to be lenient regarding ones own ambitions and aspirants, ofcourse within limits for it is said "One should know one's capability and should not have aspirations beyond it. Anonymity is better for the ignorant than fame. One should not seek what he cannot obtain lest he lose what he has." Further Rule 179, allowed a Sufi to stay with a rich man, specially if he happens to be a sultan, but at the same time warned that he (the Sufi) should not be deluded by the praise and flattery which might be showered upon him lavishly. Just as the Sufis say that one should know one's capability and should not have aspirations beyond it Sri Ramakrishna also endorsed the same view for once referring to Hazra ~~who~~ he knew always indulged in dry philosophical discussions and would repeatedly declare that "I AM HE (God)". But with all that he had a soft

corner in his heart for money, material things and people's attention. He could never aspire to understand that "God alone is the Doer. Everything happens by HIS will." (Gospel, Page 236) So also Sri Ramakrishna was an example who while living under the munificence of Rani Rasmani and her son-in-law Mathur Babu was never spoiled by their wealth. He always used to say "that the God alone does everything; that He is the operator and man the machine." He used to give the Vedantic example. "...supposing you are cooking rice in a pot, with patato, egg-plant and other vegetables. After a while the potatoes, egg-plant and other things jump about in the pot. They seem to say with pride: 'We are moving. We are jumping!' But the elders, who know, explain to the children that the vegetables and the rice are not alive, they jump not of themselves, but because of the fire under the pot; if you remove the burning wood from the hearth, then they will move no more. Likewise the pride of man, that he is the doer, springs from ignorance. Men are powerful because of the power of God. All becomes quiet when that burning wood is taken away. The puppets dance well on the stage when pulled by a wire, but they cannot move when the wire snaps" Sri Ramakrishna did not hesitate to chastise Rani Rasmani. The devout Rani used to come to the Dakshineswar temple and listen to the songs sung by the Master. On one such day an incident occurred: "One day the Rani went to the temple to worship the Divine Mother and pay her obeisance to the Goddess. But while she was externally engaged in worship, she was eagerly thinking of the possible success or failure of a pending law-suit instead of being absorbed in the divine service. The Master was then sitting there and singing songs for her at her request. He was in a state of ecstasy. Divine the state of Rani's mind, he chastised and corrected her by striking her tender person and exclaiming 'Ah! That thought is even here! The Rani spiritual aspirant fit to have the grace of the universal Mother detected the weakness of her mind and became repentant.' (Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, Page 172/73) However, Sufis, soft and gentle as they are, are against such direct and explicit chastisement.

Like Sri Ramakrishna, Sufis also allowed themselves some relaxation by visiting interesting places, singing devout songs etc. Sri Ramakrishna's liking for visiting zoo gardens, seeing circuses and attending religious dramas etc, is well known. And it was also a common

sight to see him going into ecstasy at the sight of a tiger/lion etc. in a circus for instance which made him think about the Divine Mother whose mount is a tiger. Whenever and wherever he used to go, he used to associate each and everything he witnessed to some Divine character or divine play.

Sufi Rule 195 discourages any talk which does not concern God or spirituality for it says even when one has to visit "an old woman the purpose of such a visit should be to seek God's favour and blessing and to pray" meaning thereby that any flippant talk should be avoided for which old women are prone to sometimes. Similarly the Master did not like worthless talk and listening to calumny and gossip. Once his disciple and later biographer "M" was found discussing with Narendra the degeneration that has set in amongst the younger generation and at that moment the master came and the following conversation took place:

Master:"Well what are you talking about?

Naren: I have been asking M about the boys in the schools. The conduct of students nowadays isn't all that it should be.

The Master became grave and said to M rather seriously:"This kind of conversation is not good. It isn't desirable to indulge in any talk but talk of God. You are their senior and you are intelligent. You should not have encouraged them to talk about such matters:"(Gospel P. 122)

Although there is a strong belief that the Sufis are mostly non meat-eaters one cannot be sure of its authenticity. But Sufism allowed feasts to be held where tasty food was served, for Rule 186 allowed them provided they are eaten only when one is really hungry and after hard work. Hadith also quotes as saying the Prophet did not abstain from good tasty food. Sri Ramakrishna although himself a frugal eater insisted on pure, tasty well-cooked food. He used to join with other devotees at festivals and celebrations and enjoyed. But he was very particular about the way the food was cooked is illustrated when on a certain day when the Master had asked for a certain dish the ladies of the household found one particular spice was not there. An elderly lady told others that they should carry on cooking without that particular spice since it was only a minor ingredient. Overhearing the conversation the Master was disturbed and calling out to the elderly lady he said that whatever was to be done should be done perfectly, specially food and that she should send somebody to

the shop to get one pice worth of the spice. Occassionally he used to feed people, specially his young devotees and enjoy seeing them eat heartily.

Many are the rules and laws of Sufis which advocate a person's escape from unethical and irreligious situations and circumstances. One such Rule 188 allows a Muslim to escape than debase himself in such situations since it says: "Escape from that which cannot be tolerated is a commendable custom of the Prophets." Rule 190 allowed that "one may even reprimand one's bretheren, however this should be done for the purpose of eliminating malice from the heart and not by way of revenge. It is better to reprimand frankly than to rancour secretly."

However the most commendable and praiseworthy dictum is Rule 193 which condemns the spreading of dissension and disbelief, as it states : The Prophet ordered the destruction of the mosque of the dissenters because he knew that although it was, in appearance, a mosque, it was in fact, intended for spreading dissension and disbelief. (Based on the quotations from Quoran 9:108). Sri Ramakrishna was too gentle in nature to order any such thing: however he too did not like hypocrisy in the name of God and religion. Talking about pundits who speak words of wisdom but practice otherwise he said: "...they merely talk, they don't live up to them. They are like vultures, which soar very high but keep their gaze fixed on the charnel-pit. What I mean is that those pundits attached to the world, to 'woman and gold' If I hear that pundits are practising discrimination and dispassion, then I fear them. Otherwise I look upon them as mere goats and dogs" (Gospel Page 419)

Surprisingly Rule 194 allows lies (falsity) if it is in the interest of a worthy cause by referring to the story of Abraham and David from Quran. Similar stories are also found in other epics like Mahabharata etc. and it is said that once Bankim wrote a series of articles, something justifying such actions as described in Mahabharata and thereby got himself entangled into a great controversy with the Brahmo Samaj and even the family of Rabindranath Tagore particularly.

Showing love and respect to old women Sufi Rule 195 says "There is a ruksha to visit old women. The purpose of such visits should be to seek God's favour and blessings and to pray". Sri Ramakrishna also had great respect to elderly women. His love and respect to his own mother is well known. Besides he used to visit a poor lady by name Gopaler Ma

in Kamarhati who remains unsurpassed among the women devotees of the Master in the richness of her devotion and spiritual experiences. At the age of sixty, she visited Sri Ramakrishna and a bag containing her rosary and some ordinary sweets that she had purchased for him on the way was with her. As soon as the Master saw her he exclaimed with love and affection: "Oh you have come: Give me something to eat." With great hesitation she gave him the sweets which he ate with relish and asked her to bring some curries cooked by her when she came next. The Master was a past master in winning hearts by his simplicity and love.

Sufi Rule 196 allows one to behave with affected politeness with rich and powerful persons just to be on the safe side but not with a view to gain any material benefits. Once Aisha found that the Prophet was trying to be extra polite with a person whom he as well as she knew to be very evil and bad. When she asked the Prophet for his attitude it is reported in Hadith that he told her "O, Aisha, the worst of persons is one whom you treat with respect for fear of his foul tongue." Sri Ramakrishna was also very wary of city people specially Calcuttans and it is said that he used to do Pranams to them more politely than the socalled gesture of 'namaskar'. May be also to instill in them politeness and humility and at the same time to be on the safe side.

Some of the Sufi Rules are so practical and simple that they give the impression of being very mundane and wordly: on the other hand they are meant to give protection from the rough and dangerous acts of riffraffs and also are in a diplomatic manner to keep the rude and insolent people away and thereby ward off danger and crisis. These Sufi rukhas give evidence to the later compromises in Sufism to manage the affairs and administration of organisations and property. This generally happens with most of the religions as they grow and expand.

However what is surprising to find is the Sufi rule allowing the plundering of food at banquets, engaging poets for the composition and recitation of poems eulogising one's wealth, reputation and greatness (Sufi Rules 203 and 204) It went so far as to allow boasting and publishing one's own glory and religious superiority as stated in Rule 205. Sri Ramakrishna also had one desire, -the desire to see the glories of God again and again.

All these must be the modifications of Sufi Rules later, for Rule 206 mentions that "Prophet never sought to take revenge for a wrong done to him, but only took revenge on those who violated the prohibitions of God." If a Sufi is supposed not to hanker for name and fame nor for wealth how is he to live? Taking into consideration the possibility of a Sufi going astray with the accumulation of property, power, name and fame it is said that the Prophet said: "There are four things which are of this world and yet are not of it: (a) a piece of bread to satisfy your hunger, (b) a piece of cloth to cover your nakedness, (c) a house to shelter you and (d) a virtuous wife. Ordinarily a Sufi has no right to possess anything more than these four things."

All these Rules are a general codification of laws and principles of conduct for morality and external protection. The right behaviour, 'Dharma' as it is known in Hinduism begins with the intensity and the quality of such yearning known as 'TAUBA' (conversion). This conversion is not merely a registration or belongingness - but a conscious resolve to lead a devoted life, abandoning the wordly nature of it as far as possible gradually. Conversion therefore is a step forward, rather the first and the most important step in the faith-building process of life in Islam.

The second is a collateral form of JIHAD, meaning a holy war for the sake of one's faith within himself - not necessarily an all out external war (such as the one against infidel) as it is wrongly understood by people.

The third in the series is to live in isolation which is known as KHALWA-WA-UZLA. To live in isolation from everything from time to time.

The first in this series which is 'TAUBA' is almost equivalent to the concept of earnestness of Sri Ramakrishna. The second one is 'IKHLAS' or sincerity about which we have said enough. The third or the final one is 'KHALWA-WA-UZLA', that is to go away to some solitary place and meditate on God according to Sri Ramakrishna. This he declared is important because: "...The mind cannot dwell on God if it is immersed day and night in worldliness, in wordly duties and responsibilities: it is most necessary to go into solitude now and then and think of God. To fix the mind on God is very difficult in the beginning, unless one practises meditation in solitude." (Gospel page.81) Further illustrating the point he said: "...But one must go into solitude to attain this divine love. To get butter from milk you must let it set into curd in a secluded spot: if it is too much

disturbed, milk wont turn into curd. Next, you must put aside all other duties, sit in a quiet spot and then churn the curd only then do you get butter." (Ibid page 82)

The fourth one is 'TAQWA' or the awe of God. One is awe struck looking at the glories of God and His power. It does not mean fear of God. No. Since God is most endearing, one can never be afraid of HIM. One is so much impressed by HIS omnipotency and love that certain signs like trembling, speechlessness and crying which are also there in a state of fear appears. This was the state of Arjuna when he saw the Visvarupa of Lord Krishna in the battle field. It is said that Arjuna "having heard that speech of Kesava, the crowned one (Arjuna) with joined palms, trembling, prostrating himself, again addressed Krishna, in a choked voice, bowing down, overwhelmed with fear" (Gita. Chap.11.Sloka 35)

The fifth in order is 'WARA' i.e. abstaining from all unnecessary and unseemly occupations. Sri Ramakrishna used to prevent such persons who were making good and steady spiritual progress under him even to do any kind of job lest their purity and freedom may be affected under the compulsion of rules and regulations and obligations to others. Then comes 'ZUHD' or the renunciation of even most of the permitted pleasures after certain time. Both Sufis and Sri Ramakrishna laid great stress on Silence or 'Samt', the latter clubbed it with 'seculsion'

The eight one in the Sufi practice is 'QUANNA' which is contentment and exactly something like 'SANTOSHA' in Yoga practice. According to Sufis, the act of contentment is an imperishable treasure and nobody can deny it indeed. The last degree of contentment is 'RIDA'. According to al-Qushairi, the Khorasanian School, it is considered that RIDA is a development out of 'tawakul'. However Iraqui School does not agree with this. It is a kind of tranquil pleasure, procured not out of any outside thing but from one's perennial self and blissful nature. The other two associated with this are (a) 'hasad' or envy (b) 'Ghilea or slander. There is no doubt these two are very disturbing to the inner tranquility of life. One can consider 'Shukor' or thankfulness to God as another practice or quality which helps building up an inner peace. So also patience or forbearence which is a quality which is worth to be aware of and practice. Sri Ramakrishna was very fond of this quality and he used to utter it thrice, in sanskrit and native languages.

Although all these qualities have their own importance the foremost remains, the constant awareness of Lord, called by the Sufis as 'Muraquaba' and which the saint of Dakshineswar used to emphasize again and again through his teachings and parables. Bliss or Ananda is the last stage of joy which is slightly more intense than 'Rida' of Sufis perhaps. For there is no controversy whether it is a 'Hal' or 'Maquam'.

Sufis practised an attitude of Dasyabhava, an ideal of being the servant of God and complete surrender to the Lord (RABLE). Sri Ramakrishna used to give as an example of this attitude Mahavira and Hanuman on several occasions. Sufis called this ideal of servanthood as 'UBUDIYA'.

Talking about this Dasya Bhava and complete surrender to God Sri Ramakrishna once remarked very interestingly: "You partake of the nature of him on whom you meditate. By worshipping Siva you acquire the nature of Siva. A devotee of Rama meditated on Hanuman day and night. He used to think he had become Hanuman. In the end he was firmly convinced that he had even grown a little tail." (Ibid.page 688). This example of Hanuman is the typical character depicting 'UBUDIYA' (the servant attitude to God) as they call it amongst the Sufis. Sri Ramakrishna's identification with the attitude was so much that he once even worshipped an actor playing the role of Hanuman. According to the master, Hanuman with his servant attitude was the typical example of a devotee, in fact an ideal devotee.

Everybody is aware that 'desire' of anything is the greatest impediment in spiritual life and the Sufis termed it as 'IRADA' or personal desire. Not only Sri Ramakrishna but almost all the followers of each and every religion would like to discuss its negative qualities and the means to discard it once for all. But in fact it is not an easy task even after lot of trying etc. No doubt Sri Ramakrishna had also one greatest desire which he always wanted to share with others and that is to, as already mentioned before, was to sing the glories of Lord. However this was not a desire according to him for he has once stated in reply to a query: "Then what is the way for those who have not seen God? Must they give up all the duties of the world" he replied "The best path for this age is bhaktiyoga, the path of bhakti prescribed by Narada: to sing the name and glories of God and pray to HIM with a longing heart, 'O God, give me knowledge, give me

devotion and reveal Thyself to me:" (Ibid page 452) He also confirmed that by doing so, "Thus you will destroy, lust, anger, the desire for creature comforts and so on."

If giving up desire is the negative aid to spiritual progress, another most important practice to be followed without fail is truthfulness and which the Sufis term as 'SIDQ' in thought and act. This is a very fundamental concept or core of religion to which all religions have put the seal of confirmation. Sri Ramakrishna gave up everything even the sadhana which he had practised undergoing so many hardships to the Divine Mother but one thing he could not give up was truthfulness. He could not give up or detach himself from this one quality. Truth was God of Him.

Another significant human quality which finds a prominent place in Sufi terminology is 'HAYA' meaning shame and it has been used in a very interesting manner to indicate being ashamed of being found wanting in sincerity. The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna also point out that shame, hatred and fear are the three greatest impediments that face a spiritual aspirant. Until one is able to shake-off these three from his or her life, it is very difficult for them to progress spiritually. On this point Sufis differ slightly since they use the emotions of 'fear' and 'shame' in different ways and sense. Though the Sufis have spoken eloquently about love, they do not talk much about hatred. But one should note that this Sufi attitude is purely psychological, whereas in Buddhism the concept of love is more ethical in character and in Hinduism it is more philosophical and spiritual.

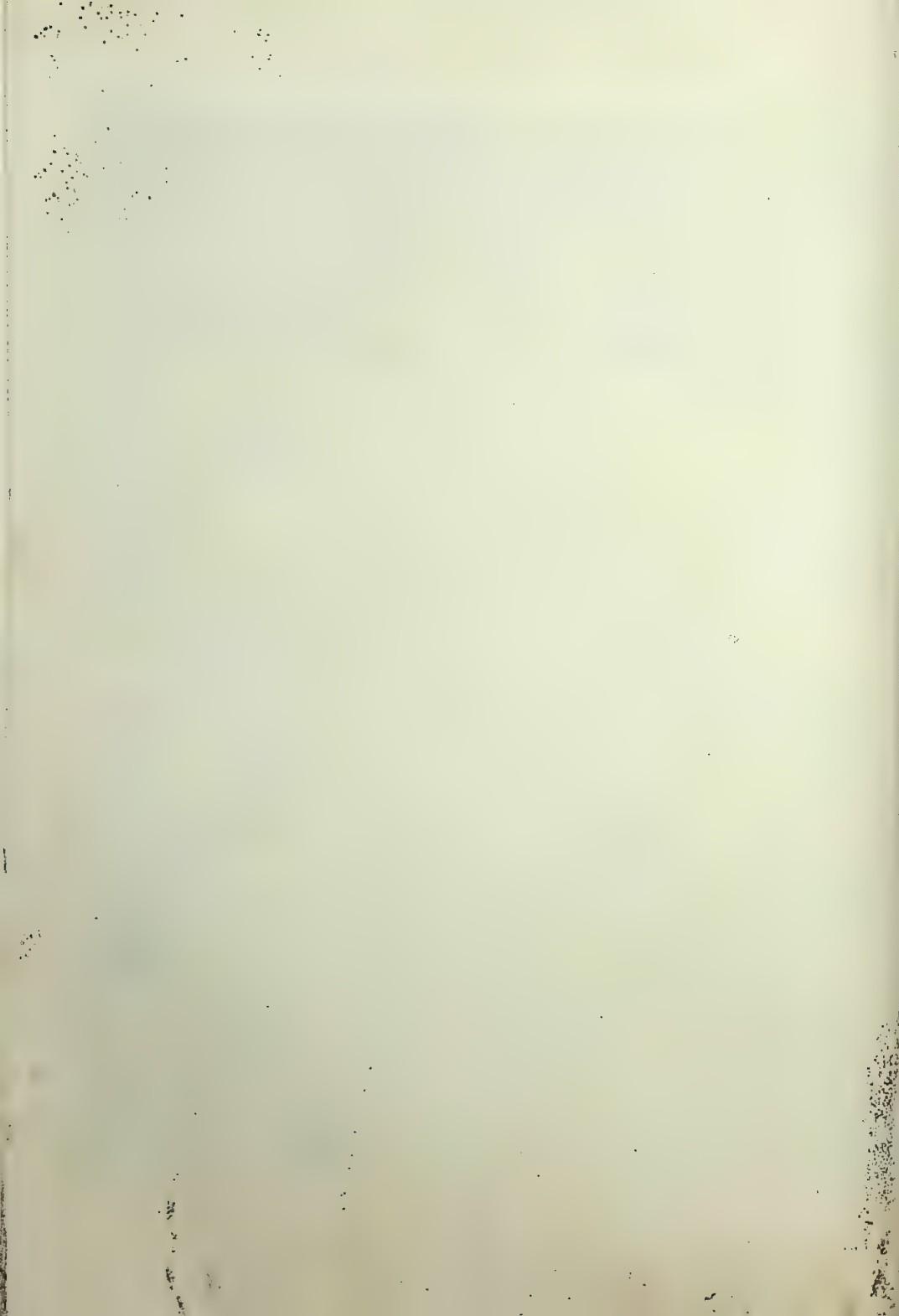
For Sufis 'KHULUQ' meaning moral character which is considered as the highest quality even praised by God. How the moral character of a person is transformed by his complete surrender to Him was illustrated by Sri Ramakrishna when he said:"The steel sword turns into a gold one, at the touch of the 'philosopher's stone': and though it retains its former shape, it is incapable of causing injury like the steel sword. Similarly, the outward forms of the man who succeeds in touching the feet of God is not changed, but he can no longer do any evil" (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna page 299).

The term which denoted much both to the Sufis and to Sri Ramakrishna is 'PURITY' or ~TASAUWF' according to Sufi Terminology. this quality is much preferred amongst the Khorasian School, specially the al-qushairi sect. According to Sri Ramakrishna, moral purity is one of the

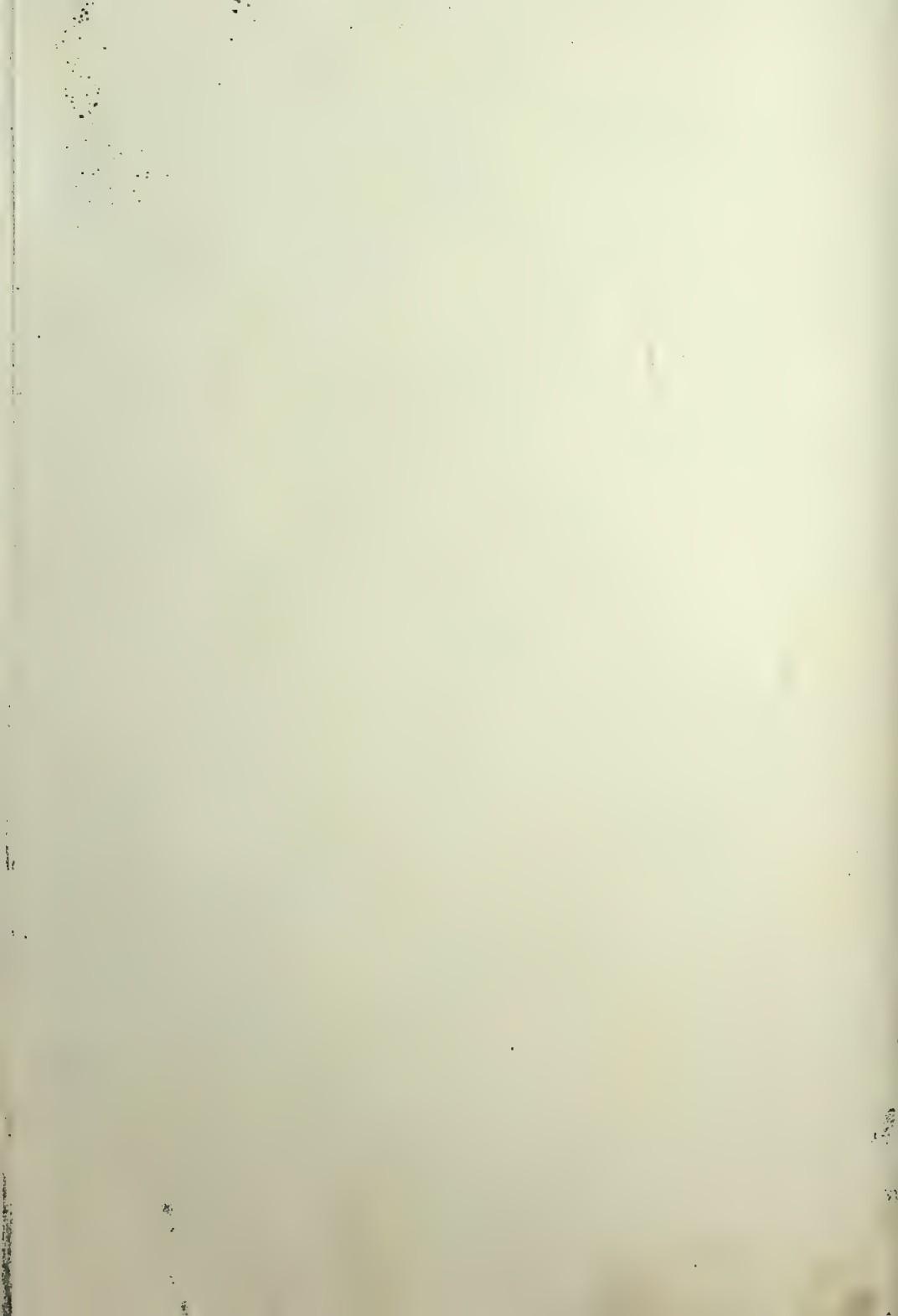
first requisites in spiritual life, to be cherished and taken care of, for he said " God is of the nature of Eternity, Purity and Consciousness." This emphasis on purity is something which mattered very much to the Master and he considered :"the mind is like white linen just returned from the laundry. It takes on the colour you dip in." Asked by a devotee whether it is necessary for the mind to be 'first sent to the laundry' he said:"Yes, first is the purification of the mind. Afterwards, if you direct the mind to the contemplation of God, it will be coloured by God Consciousness. Again, if you direct the mind to worldly duties, such as the acting of a play, it will be coloured by wordliness." (Ibid. Page 429/30) The Master was more concerned about the purity of the mind than that of the body, although the latter is also of importance. However bodily clealiness alone will not do. It is also a fact that there exists a close body-mind relationship - but body itself being more materialistic and gross cannot be hundred percent pure:whereas mind can be to a greater extent, being subtle and nearer to the heart and the soul as well as intelligence. Still there is no contradiction between mind-body approach to 'purity' : they are not only complimentary but reciprocal to each other, there is no doubt about it.

Now after discussing this purity aspect, let us turn to another very interesting Sufi practice called 'MAHABBA' - meaning love of the God for the devotee - one must notice that this is a unique feature relating to the love of the God to the man and not the common concept of the man's love for God. This word 'Mahabba' is something like the 'grace' or favour and in sanskrit 'KRIPA'. Like the Sufis, Sri Ramakrishna also believed that without 'KRIPA' nothing can be done, or even if it is done may not turn out to be successsful. In one of his favourite songs which he used to sing often he used to claim that until the wind of grace blows in a direct and straight direction, the boat will not move swiftly and gently and as such it will become very difficult to reach the other shore. Similarly without Kripa or grace it is not possible to reach the destination in a spiritual voyage and to acquire this 'KRIPA' one has to keep on yearning for God and His Grace and this the master called it as 'Vyakulata'. This yearning for God and his 'lila' according to Sri Ramakrishna, is itself a psychological and emotional turning of the mind towards God. To go away from the temptations of this world and tread the path towards God and Sufis Called it "SHAUQ" in their practice.

Thus So far, we have managed to cover a good deal of the important features of the Sufi sadhana, in contrast or along with the concept of Hindu devotion or bhakti, as reflected in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna who was not only a devotee with traditional outlook but at the same time the fore-runner of the modern Hinduism. His ardent disciple, Swami Vivekananda had also been frequently referred to as the future architect of Hinduism that is yet to break its way through the present milieu in the culture seeking to meet the challenge that is facing 'religion' and spirituality!



Part II



As mentioned in the introduction, Part II is mainly for those aspirants or sadhakas, who are initiates and are very serious and sincere about their spiritual life in individual capacity apart from the collective and social approach. Part I dealt with "ADAB" in general. In this respect Part I of these Sufi Rules is somewhat like the general approach to sadhana in Vedanta which we have already covered extensively in the 'Sufi-Ramakrishna Study Series III, Sadhana the Pathway to God concluding session of the Birds' Conference and the Swan. Only difference is that these 'adabs' are stated as Rules, not as sadhana. Generally rules are for all to know whereas sadhanas or pathways are to be followed strictly and sincerely. No doubt rules are knowledge but sadhanas are not only knowledge but knowledge to be pursued, practised with determination. Rules are not pathways by themselves like the sadhana or practice. Sadhana is the journey itself whereas rule is like map, a preparation to the journey, it is not journey by itself. FUTUWWAHS(in the Part II) are mostly a combination of both the aspects- the journey, the knowledge and the preparation for the journey also. Futuwwahs are not merely inspiration or speculation only. These are the guidance of the experienced people or Masters who have experienced this process of spiritual journey or trekking thoroughly by themselves.

Because "the word 'faith' is frequently used to designate by analogy a series of initiatic events that represent successive stages in spiritual journey," it is called 'suluk' and it means lifting of different 'veils' separating man from the essential Reality. Only a Master (Guru) with rich experience and outstanding intellect regarding individual and general circumstances and surroundings can help in the journey. It is not necessary such a master need be theoretical at all. What is actually needed is an understanding of an individual mind -the veil or cover, rather the main hindrance or samskara of the person concerned. A different kind of mastery in removing such obstacles or samskaras is to be the main qualification for such a Guru or Master.

In this context a very apt illustration is given by Sri Ramakrishna which can be understood even by an ordinary devotee. He said :"God Himself has provided different forms of worship. He who is the Lord of the Universe has arranged all these forms to suit different men in different stages of knowledge. The mother cooks different dishes to suit the

stomachs of her different children. Suppose she has five children. If there is a fish to be cooked, she prepares various dishes from it - pilau, pickled fish, fried fish, and so on - to suit their different tastes and power of digestion." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 81.). Similarly spiritual food has to be served to the aspirant according to their power of assimilation by the Guru. Issuing of a general formula applicable to one and all and to expect an aspirant to shoot up from his present state to spiritual heights all of a sudden may miss the target and leave the aspirant bewildered and dejected as well, which is not only injurious to the aspirant but also to the Guru as well. A natural and successive stage of progress in his/her spiritual journey is very important and nothing much can be gained by expediting it unnecessarily. One has to be steady and plan out the journey according to ones capacity. This spiritual progress and the ultimate gaining of the goal is just like any other journey or pilgrimage; nothing is gained by being in a hurry: ignoring this important aspect if an aspirant tries to reach the goal by a short-cut there will be very little progress and chances are that the same process has to be repeated many times through successive births and deaths. In this respect we cannot do better than quote Sri Ramakrishna who said "In the musical scale there are the notes sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha and ni : but one cannot keep one's voice on ni for a long time. The ego does not vanish altogether." Reaching the highest may not be possible immediately specially for the beginner. It has to be practised. These successive stages have been very well described in terms of various positions in the Yoga-Physiognomy, as well by the various other Masters and saints including Sri Ramakrishna. "Successive stages in spiritual journey" therefore speaks of a gradual evolution of one's self and not any sudden miracle or conversion perhaps that is a fall out of the 'grace' merely.

Then we come across another very important statement in these Futuwwahs that have been collected by Sulami (Ref: Franz Taeschner's in *Studia Orientalia Joanni Pedersen...*, Copenhagen, 1953 English translation) which clearly tells to spiritual aspirants, that in this spiritual pursuit, there should be no room whatsoever for 'another' or 'others' besides the notion of 'oneness' with everything. There is only one and there is nothing which is separate from or away from this 'oneness'. One is not different or separate from another human being but these Sufi saints

go so far as to declare that "others in this case embraces the totality of creatures, not only human kind". The emphasis on this 'oneness' is so extensive in these Futwwahs that they cover even the mineral, vegetal and animal kingdoms as well. Although this may not be exactly the same and pervasive but surely it is a pantheistic attitude almost akin to the similar type of experience of a Bhakta (devotee) in Hinduism. However in the all-pervasive statement "A-Brahma Stambha Paryanta" (from Brahman to the yonder pillar everything is ONE) of Hinduism there is practically no room either for expansion or extension because it is One only already. But this devotional approach of the Sufi- sadhakas is the same as the approach and experiences of masters and saints of various religions throughout the world, there is no doubt about it.

Sri Ramakrishna also experienced this feeling of 'oneness' with everything. Let us just have a glance about such an experience when Sri Ramakrishna was still a boy. According to Swami Saradananda, Author of the book 'Sri Ramakrishna - The Great Master' : "Endowed as he was by nature with great powers of concentration, he became so identified with an object on which he set his mind that he seemed to lose his outer consciousness entirely. The experience we now relate also had its origin in the boy's tendency towards the spiritual contemplation of beauty. One day, while roaming carefree in the fields, Gadadhar (Sri Ramakrishna's childhood name) looked up towards the sky and saw a newly formed dark cloud, and against it the orderly movement of a flock of cranes in full flight, with their snow-white wings outspread. The boy became completely absorbed in the beauty of it all, that awareness of his own body and of all other earthly surroundings vanished altogether and he fell down unconscious" (page 56). It is said that Sri Ramakrishna used to feel severe pain whenever a flower or leaf was plucked that gradually he gave up plucking flowers from the plants and even used to walk gently on green grass etc. Again we are told that once Sri Ramakrishna himself described an incident : "The Divine Mother revealed to me in the Kali temple that it was She who had become everything. She showed me that everything was full of Consciousness. The image was Consciousness, the altar was Consciousness, the water vessels were Consciousness, the door-sill was Consciousness, the marble floor was Consciousness - all was Consciousness,

Consciousness. I found everything inside the room soaked, as it were, in Bliss - the Bliss of God....." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page 15).

So obviously this claim of the Futuwwah about the 'others' as a Cosmic connection cannot be easily ignored as a mere theoretical approach only. It is possible to feel such a Cosmic connection if one is simple, innocent and composed (al-murakkab al-besit) and has the genuine feeling and faith that he is contained by all things and he contains all things (al-muhat al-muhit) or in other words that everything exists in him and he is existent in all things. This extensive or expansive relationship is also very much found in Hinduism when it talks of 'DHIRAS' (people who are calm and self composed). Lord Krishna in the 'GITA' described such persons as 'Sthitaprajna'. According to Sufi generalisations also such relationship transcends 'the where and the when' that is to say it is beyond time and space. Like the Vedantic rules, Sufi Fatuwwahs also claim some kind of "TRIPUTILAYA" wherein it is stated that at this stage "the Knowledge, the known and the knowing (al-ilm wa l-ma'lum wa l-alim) or in other words the contemplating and the contemplated (al-shahid wa l-mashhud) all become one. This state is well illustrated when Sri Ramakrishna "used to approach the throne (on which the image of Goddess Kali was kept) with a morsel of food in his hand and putting it to Her lips entreat Her to eat. Then would follow this interesting conversation, "Well Thou wishest me to take it - shall I eat it now? Very well I shall do so!" Then he would eat a portion of it and put the remainder to the mouth of the goddess and say, "very well, I have eaten, now it is Thy turn". In Arabic this is called "ARIN" and it is defined as 'the point of equilibrium of all things'. In Encyclopedia of Islam it is catalogued as Istiwa / Istilabat. Possibly meaning a state where all the differences between the will and the willed , the wish and the wished get completely lost like that in a state of union or experience of deepest relationship with the entire panorama, rather the Cosmic vision. And Islam being monotheistic and pantheistic, the holy Koran is almost Vedantic when it proclaims - "whoever hopes to meet his Lord should do good deeds and worship none but his Lord." (18:110)

One finds great similarity with this when the Upanishads say : 'Na Prajaya/Na Dhanena : Tyage Naike Amritatva Manashuh' (Not by progeny, Not by wealth, without renunciation Immortality cannot be

achieved my man) and the same sentiment is expressed in Koran when it is said :"...who begets no son, and has no partner in His dominion, nor needs He any to protect Him from humiliation - yes, magnifying Him for His greatness and glory :" (17:111).

The Futuwwahs also speak in glowing terms about renunciation or 'tyaga' in Vedantic language. Renunciation is love personified for the Sufis. According to them sacrifice done for the family is also sacrifice or service done to God who finally is the owner of all that he has, his property, his children everything he had and has. This is another way of connecting oneself to God. Such a devotee rather a servant of god who empties everything he possesses in the lap of the Lord and leaves everything to Him is the right person to be glorified. Sri Ramakrishna called this process of leaving everything in the hand of the Lord as "giving the power of attorney to God". The Prophet is also all praise for such persons for he says in the Koran :"...that such noble youths (FITYAN) who believed in their Lord and we advance them in guidance." (Koran 18:113) for these 'Fitiyans' are none other than the 'Sishyas' in scriptures of the Hindus who have been initiated into the path of 'Sadhana' by a guru. The guru guides the aspirants in the spiritual journey through successive steps. Sri Ramakrishna was the proud Guru for such a small group of young disciples - they were about 16 in number and he used to call them 'Young Bengal'. He was very fond of this band of teenagers who were mostly in colleges and was ever ready to help them in their spiritual journey. On them he showered all his love and blessings and through them he has left his teachings and spiritual guidance to the world at large.

The significance and importance of these Futuwwahs lie not in themselves totally but depends on how they are interpreted and followed. So it is but natural that the Book of Sufi Chivalry says cryptically : "Know that Futuwwah means following the ordinance of perfect devotion, leaving all evil and attaining in action and in thought the best of visible and hidden good conduct. Every condition and every moment demand from you one aspect of Futuwwahs. There is no state or time without that demand." This is called in Vedantic Scriptures and Bhakti literature as 'NIRANTARA' or 'NAIRANTARYA' i.e. constant reflection and awareness of the self and the Divine without any break - a state for which Sri Ramakrishna himself is a perfect example.

These Futuwwahs cater to the needs of all kinds of aspirants. There is a Futuwwah fit for your behaviour towards God, another towards Prophet and others, towards his companions; yet others toward the pure ones of the past, your sheikh, your brotherhood and the two angels on your shoulders who keep the accounting of your deed". Ultimately all the Futuwwahs and even activities prescribed are steeped with or even braced with God-consciousness, since finally there is nothing excepting God-God-in-me or Me-in-God, that continues as infinite, eternal and as the only single thing most abiding in life in this world.

Having become an aspirant for this spiritual life how to measure the progress : for this the Book of Sufi Chivalry has the answer : it says that such an aspirant will be less and less cruel as he travels in the spiritual path and advises: "Respond to cruelty with kindness and do not punish for an error". It is generally advised to avoid going to such persons even though they may be friends who cannot help you spiritually thereby one not only saves time and energy which can be better utilised in some other manner but also negates the idea of punishing a person who might have done wrong to oneself. To give up the idea of punishing the guilty is very hard indeed, however Sri Ramakrishna was never revengeful or punishment oriented. Once Trailokya, son of Mathur Babu ordered Hriday to leave the temple premises for worshipping his daughter without his knowledge or permission. When Hriday asked his uncle to leave the garden also Sri Ramakrishna refused. "Shortly after some one came and told Sri Ramakrishna that he, too, must leave the garden. Without a murmur, the Master rose and walked towards the gate. Trailokya saw him from a distance and hurrying up to him said, "Sir, where are you going ?" The Master quietly replied : Didn't you order me to leave the garden?" Trailokya implored him to come back and said "Kindly pray to the Mother that the girl may not be injured !" "Through the Mother's grace she will be alright" said the Master and returned to his room, as if nothing had happened." (Life of Sri Ramakrishna, page 303). Again it is said that once one Halder of Kalighat (Calcutta) dared to assault Sri Ramakrishna without any reason; but Sri Ramakrishna was not at all revengeful towards him and did not even mention the event to anybody for a long time. His teaching was to endure and forgive most of these injustices suffered here in this world and we have elaborated on this topic elsewhere in our Sufi-treatment

in a little more detailed manner. Finding fault with the world or even with one's own friends is disturbing to the spiritual life says a Futuwwah and the Book of Sufi Chivalry tells us :"If you start seeking faults in Muslims, you will cause dissent among them or you will atleast start dissension". This almost tallies with the rules framed by Swami Vivekananda and prescribed by the Ramakrishna Math at Belur for the Brotherhood in the monastic organisation.

It is true although it is branded as non-spiritual, food is the most discussed thing after God perhaps. So finding fault with the quantity and quality of food offered/available is said to hamper the spiritual life. Agreeing with this a Futuwwah says : "The Messenger of Allah never looked down upon any food presented to him. He ate it if he had appetite and did not eat it if he had no appetite". Even in Hinduism a novice in the spiritual path is asked to go only to three houses asking for food, eat only what he gets from these three houses only and if nothing is procured to go hungry.

Often it is said amongst the brothers of the Ramakrishna Order also, to be 'gentle' if you can, for gentility helps rather protects one from spiritual disturbance. Instead of gentility, the translation in the Book of Sufi Chivalry mentions the word 'Generosity' as it is said 'generosity is a characteristic of the people of paradise' And is the 'main good conduct and behaviour, the kind that reflects the perfect behaviour of the people of the paradise'. Perhaps this paradisical quality of conduct and behaviour is considered not very suitable to the order of sanyasins. and may be it is considered as an aristocratic and courtly-type more suitable to Islam where a comparatively higher aristocratic and courtly-type of nobility that is being sought after than in the austere Hindu monastic life. But it is a different matter altogether with 'gentility' and 'simplicity' for this quality of 'gentility' cannot be just an artificial accomplishment- at least as it occurs in the Upanishad and is termed as 'BHADRA' meaning good, without malice or animosity.

Ofcourse this term 'generosity' has a different meaning in Sufism. For it is advised "Care for your bretheren more than you care for your own family". Sufism even goes so far as to pun those who have given up everything for Allah, have so much austerities that their bellies have shrunk and contracted from hunger still prefer to show generosity by offering a servant for their guests' comfort and luxury. And through

Muhammad Ibn Quraysh we hear that the Prophet said, 'how awful a society that does not accept guests.' Another saying goes something like this: "for the quality of being satisfied with little for themselves and their extreme generosity towards others ". In fact plain and simple living (of which Sri Ramakrishna was a living example in the modern age) was so much given priority by the Prophet himself that he declared it seems :"Whoever has an extra riding animal should give it to some one who has none. Whoever has extra food should give it those who do not have any." It is also said in Hinduism that a man should call out 'Is there anybody who is hungry : if so please do come and partake food with us' thrice and then only take his food. There is also the custom of keeping a portion of the main diet like rice outside in the open so that any hungry animal, birds or insects can eat. It is also said that the Prophet was so keen that one should not possess more than bare necessities that he used to count peoples' luggage before starting on a journey. "We all felt (said Abu Amr Muhammad, Ibn Ahmad Ibn Hamdan) that none of us had any right to extra property". Sri Ramakrishna also remarked that those sadhus who carry big bundles of their belongings do not appear to be consistent with their vocation nor does it look appropriate to a person who has renounced everything. Sufis also say - Allah loves best His poor and lonely servants.

Another Futuwwah which is very similar to the injunctions of other religions is the stressing of the uselessness of 'putting up a show' so to say of spiritual fervor when the heart is not yet cleansed pure and the mind still runs after material things. So it aptly says :"Do not wear the woolen mantle of total devotion until your heart is clean, because if you wear these clothes, while your knowledge is deficient, the Compeller of the Heavens will tear them off your back". In Hinduism also it is said that mere adornment will not do without proper attunement of the mind and body for the sake of it (Divine-Life). Sri Ramakrishna said :"First of all dive deep to the bottom and gather up the gems (Purity of heart and mind). Then you may do other things. But nobody wants to plunge. People are without spiritual discipline and prayer, without renunciation and dispassion. They learn a few words and immediately start to give lectures. It is difficult to teach others. Only if a man gets a command from God, after realising HIM, he is entitled to teach." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 54)

As a sign of their concern for others and adaptability to others' conveniences Sufis advocated adjustability, as when they said : "Whenever the Prophet ate with others he was the last one to begin eating". Similarly Hindus also offer the food to God first, then invite the guests to start eating and only when the comfort of all others is taken care of the host starts eating. And about fasting Sufis' idea was - "Share the joy of your brethren to the extent that if you are keeping a non-obligatory fast, you will break it to join the feast and festivities". Similar is the attitude of the Ramakrishnites. It is reported that Ibn Abdullah once heard Prophet saying :

"If a person who is fasting joins his brethren and they ask him to break his fast, he should break it". How considerate are these great men !

A smiling face is always a welcome sight irrespective of whether it is of a saint or an ordinary person. As if to corroborate this universal truth the Prophet once remarked "Allah hates those who make disagreeable and sad faces at their friends". Swami Vivekananda who was used to the ever-smiling face of his Guru - Sri Ramakrishna in all its child like innocence once said that people with such sad and serious faces are mostly dyspeptic and that this long face had very little to do with spirituality. A spiritual person must have a face illuminating the inner joy, radiating happiness and hope. However according to popular Christian belief a saint must have a long hanging face itched with sadness. Most probably this idea had its origin in the suffering undergone by Christ culminating in His crucification.

Since 'love' is the main emphasis of a Sufi's sadhana, they cannot be remorseful or sad. Once a disciple and a devotee asked :"Show me the shortest way to reach Allah Most High" to which Abu Yazid replied: "Love those beloved of Allah and make yourself lovable to them so that they love you, because Allah looks into the hearts of those whom He loves seventy times a day. Perchance He will find your name in the heart of the one He loves : then he will love you too, and He will forgive you your wrong doings".

To Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples any actions done with love and devotion are the shortest routes to God and Spiritual life..Once it is said that Swami Vijnanandaji a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna assured one of his Sevakas (a sadhu attending on him) who was not only a very good

cook but also used to prepare 'Bhog' (offering of cooked food) to Sri Ramakrishna with love and devotion that his preparations were so good that he had no hesitation even to ask Sri Ramakrishna whether he did not find the preparations excellent since he prepared the food with so much love and devotion. Is it not just like finding 'your name in the heart of the one He loves' as expressed by Abu Ya Zid in the above? So love expressed indirectly through His beloved is also equally effective!

Both Sufism and the views of Sri Ramakrishna regarding 'work' are very similar. About the work or action in ones life according to Sufis is described in the following manner : "It is not right for a Sufi not to work and earn his livelihood unless his situation makes it unnecessary, or he is clearly ordered to abandon worldly work. But if he needs to work and there is no reason for him not to work, he must work. Withdrawing from work is for those who have attained a spiritual level at which they are freed from the necessity of possessions and the following of custom". It is a neutral and natural view and very clear cut indeed. Sri Ramakrishna had the same natural view about the attitude to work. According to him work will drop out naturally from the life of a sadhaka like the dry and natural scab of a healed wound. There is no need to remove it forcefully.

The idea is that, until one completely and fully gives up all his desires and will, the Cosmic-will will not be so effective at all. In connection with this there is the story that one Said ibn Uthman al., Abbas went on a pilgrimage eighty times on foot and in utter poverty. "When he was circumambulating the Kaaba, there came to his heart a vast sense of love, and he uttered the words : 'O my beloved !' Then he heard a secret voice say, 'Are you not yet prepared to give up your attachment to the feeling of love?' He fainted, when he returned to consciousness, he heard himself saying - 'I am nothing, I am nothing, I am nothing !'

There is a popular Sufi saying which advises one to "Keep on accounting of your thoughts and deeds. For that, you have to be conscious and know yourself and you must have the conscience to regret that you are wasting your life in continuous revolt against your Creator" And about this accounting Sri Ramakrishna simply repeated what some of the earlier saints also had said i.e., to be sincere and not to allow any burglary, (by thieves like hypocrisy/pretension etc.) to take place, to rob you of this sincere love or bhava towards the Divine beloved. In this connection there

is a very touching story narrated in the "Book of Sufi Chivalry" : "A man in his attempt to keep an accounting of himself had figured out that he was sixty years old. He counted the days which totalled 21,500. He screamed in horror and fainted. When he came to (senses) he said, 'woe to me! Even if I had sinned only once a day, I would appear in front of my Lord with 21,500 sins. But I have sinned ten thousand times a day! What will become of me?' He passed out again. They tried to revive him and found that he was dead."

Such intense yearning for God-revelation had happened to Sri Ramakrishna during his intense Sadhana days. During this time he forgot to distinguish between day and night, lost count of the days and even forgot about food and sleep. At the end of each day he used to cry in despair :"Dost thou not, O Mother, hear even a little of the many prayers I address to Thee? Thou didst show thyself to Ramprasad. Why shouldst Thou not then reveal Thyself to me?" (Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master, Page 162). Such intense feeling for the love of God is the hall-mark of Sufis. Junayad says "Allah's servants are such that when they remember His magnificence, their limbs become paralysed with anxiety at the thought of being separated from their creator and from fear of their Lord". (Sufis Book of Chivalry).

Sri Ramakrishna as a bhakta (devotee) had undergone all such experiences. He was a great one for remembering God through love and prayer. He once remarked :"..one must always chant the name and glories of God and pray to HIM. An old metal pot must be scrubbed every day. What is the use of cleaning it only once ?" Similarly Sufis also believed in remembrance of the Lord for they said :"Dhikr, or the remembrance of Allah will affect both your interior and exterior life. The effect of Dhikr in the interior is acceptance 'rida', in the exterior, its effect is humility and piousness ('Khudu'/'Khushu')." Sri Ramakrishna's life is full of such instances of submissiveness, humility and piousness. He many a times told the so-called proud people of Calcutta that he had to teach them the meaning of humility, how to be humble and even how to do a 'namaskar'. He preferred to use the word 'purity' to 'piousness' in his teaching.

Great caution is advocated by Sufism while giving advice or preaching for we are told "The masters of Futuwwah are told to give advice incessantly to their Dervishes, but while they are preaching to them, they

must never lose sight of the fact that many of the things that they ask of the dervishes are also missing in themselves." Sri Ramakrishna was also very cautious in this respect and he illustrated it with a fable : "A physician prescribed medicine for a patient and said to him 'Come another day and I will give you directions about diet'. The patient lived very far away. He visited the physician later and the physician said to him : 'Be very careful about your food. It is not good for you to eat molasses.' After the patient left, another person who was there said to the physician : 'Why did you give him the all trouble of coming here again? You could very well have given him the instructions the first day.' The physician replied with a smile: 'There is a reason. I had several jars of molasses in my room that day. If I had asked the patient then to give up molasses, he would not have had the faith in my words. He would have thought : 'He has so many jars of molasses in his room, he must eat some of it. Then molasses can't be so bad.' Today I have hidden the jars. Now he will have faith in my words." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Page 580)

Highlighting the effect of spiritual discourses by learned men on the devotees, Junayad narrates :"I sat in the presence of Sheiks for ten years. They would talk about the wisdom of Sufism. I never understood what they discussed but I never raised objections to their words. Every Friday I listened to their discourses - although I did not understand a thing they said, I felt that it was true and I prevented myself from falling into the cursed state of denial. After ten years passed they came to me one day and said :"There is such and such a problem : if you have heard anything about pertaining to a similar situation tell us."

Sri Ramakrishna used to narrate the incident of a villager who used to come and listen to the discourse of Bhagvatam with great faith everyday. Although the high flown language of the narration was beyond his understanding tears used to roll down copiously on his cheeks whenever he heard the name of the Lord. Asked why he cried when he did not understand the discourse, the simple villager said : 'True I do not understand the discourse however whenever the name of the Lord is uttered by the pundit I feel I am standing in front of the Lord. So I shed tears of joy!'

To Sri Ramakrishna, ego, lust and gold were anathema similarly; devout Sufis also "refuse to act for the fulfillment of their egos or to obtain

anything that has a taste of willfulness, lust, pleasure or whim. They are able to resist the commands of their egos. They firmly pursue five goals: (a) never to be envious of what other people have. (Isha Upanishad also has pointed out 'MA GRIDHA' - do not be greedy for anybody's treasure or wealth. And Swami Vivekananda again and again warned his brother monks (Gurubhais) not to be envious of not only the material wealth but not even of any talent or special qualities possessed by them. (b) Never to trouble other people. (c) and always to control their hands (Once Swami Vivekananda wrote to one of his brother monks as follows :"....talking of restlessness of Tulsi (Swami Nirmalananda) and Khoka (Swami Subodhananda) it all means that they have no work to do. Same restlessness of Niranjan (Swami Niranjanananda) too, it means he has got no work.....") (d) their stomachs, (e) and their sexual desires. Besides these a genuine and pious Sufi is supposed to be (f) humble and they follow the ones who are superior to them in mystical knowledge."

Sri Ramakrishna also used to give lot of importance to the observance of such principles. Talking about giving trouble to others and the need for refraining from such acts he referred to one Pratap Hazra who also hailed from Kamarpukar and was very hypercritical at others and cherished an exaggerated notion of his own spiritual advancement. Jealous of Sri Ramakrishna's popularity he used to give lot of trouble to the Master. Sri Ramakrishna once told his devotees that he had prayed to Divine Mother to send Hazra away from him or to stop him from giving trouble. Similarly regarding the control of hands he narrated the advice given by a wise mother-in-law to her daughter-in-law when the latter gave too much grains in charity meaning that one should live within ones means and not be extravagant. On the control of stomach (intake of food) the Master used to instruct Holy Mother how much food each of the young aspirants should be given during their Sadhana period and had even rebuked her sometimes for giving more out of motherly love. He was very particular about the control of sex saying that a husband and wife should live like brother and sister after begetting one or two children.

A pious Sufi should 'turn away from five evils : (1) from all that is temporal (ANITYA), (2) from people (LOKA), (3) from desires (Vasana), (4) from the wish to be a leader (Netrattva), (5) from the fondness of being praised (Stuti)'. The Book of Sufi Chivalry says that the Sufis are the

people who wish for five gifts and these are accordingly : (a) that "little of this world (PARTHIVA) be given to them (B) that truth (SATYA) be given to them (Sri Ramakrishna was so fond of this quality) (c) the fear of Allah be given to them (which in Hinduism is known as DHARMA- BHIRUTA in sanskrit and is a very common saying among the Hindus also) (d) that the company of those who are close to Allah be given to them. (May be this is the reason why Sri Ramakrishna was so fond of those few young lads who were pure and true God- seekers whom even the gods would have liked to have them near and (d) they be saved from the company of those who oppose Allah". Besides these four gifts the Sufis also sought the gift of (e) that they be given the ability to know and do things that please Allah and (f) that they receive the things rejected by the ignorant.

The manner in which Sri Ramakrishna trained most of his young disciples to endure pain and suffering in their spiritual pursuit resembles very much the statement made in the Book of Sufi Chivalry : "To know Allah and to be able to endure pain and suffering for His sake is one of the main goals of Futuwah." Sri Ramakrishna tells about his own experience of agony and pain thus :"There was then an intolerable anguish in my heart because I could not have Her (Divine Mother's) vision. Just as a man wrings a towel forcibly to squeeze out all the water from it, I felt as if somebody caught hold of my heart and mind and was wringing them likewise....." (Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master, Page 162). Likewise it is mentioned that Abul Faraj al-Warthani reports what Dhu Nun said :"One day, in Egypt I saw some children throwing stones at a man. I asked the children what they wanted from him. They said, 'He is insane; he claims that he sees Allah.'" During the early sadhana days Sri Ramakrishna was also labelled as a mad man who :" casting away even his wearing apparel, he roamed naked, repeating 'Hari, Hari'. Ofcourse just the opposite happened to Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) who came running all the way to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar like a crazy man just to know whether he (Sri Ramakrishna) had seen God and only when the Master admitted that not only he had seen God but he can show Him to Narendra also that he calmed down.

It is interesting to note what conversation took place between Dhu Nun and the man who was said to be insane. In the words of Dhu Nun : "I asked them (the children) to leave him alone and let me see him. I

approached and saw a young man leaning on a wall and told him, 'May Allah have mercy upon you. Do you know what these children say ? They say that you claim to see Allah' The young man did not answer, and kept quiet for an hour. Then he lifted his head, tears rolling down his cheeks : 'Allah is my witness that I have never lost HIM since I came to know HIM' he said and recited this poem :

'O, from heights unreachable by us who are made of clay,
Blessings are sent
This life is but a struggle
The feet find their way only with death.'"

It looks as though both the Sufis and Hindus agree on the necessity of one pointed devotion towards the Lord for the Sufis say :"One of the signs of a good Muslim is that he leaves alone everything that does not concern HIM" Also, "when a believer occupies himself with things that do not concern HIM, it is a sign of Allah's wrath upon him." In Hinduism this one pointed devotion/love is called 'EKAGRATA' or 'EK-MUKHI-BHAKTI' and Sri Ramakrishna gave immense importance to it. This quality highlighted many of his teachings and parables he used to illustrate his point of view. The Master elaborated :"The Gopis had ecstatic love, unswerving and single minded devotion to one Ideal (Krishna). He narrated another incident when Hanuman came to Dwarka to see Sita and Rama (Hanuman's only ideals) so Lord Krishna realising the one-pointed love and devotion of Hanuman to Sita and Ram tells Rukmini, his wife :"You had better assume the form of Sita, otherwise there will be no escape from the hands of Hanuman !" Coming down to everyday plane the Master explains :"Do you know what devotion to one ideal is like ? It is like the attitude of a daughter-in-law in the family. She serves all the members of the family.....but with her husband she has a special relationship." (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page 228).

How difficult it is to live following this doctrine of one pointed devotion without any distractions whatsoever and that too in utter poverty we learn through Mansur Ibn as to what Abul- Abbas Ibn-Ata has to say: "It is not proper to have anything more than the proper four things found on the Table of the Poor : (1) hunger (2) poverty (3) humiliation and (4) thankfulness." Although Sri Ramakrishna did not pay much attention to

hunger his heart went out to the poor and ill. It is recounted that once he was prepared to terminate his pilgrimage to Northern India when Mathur Babu showed slight hesitation to feed and clothe the poor of Deoghar. It happened like this :"They halted for a few days at Deoghar to visit the shrine of Vaidyanath.....One day while passing through a neighbouring village Sri Ramakrishna was greatly distressed to see the wretched condition of its people. Moved with sympathy for them, he said to Mathur :"You are steward of the Mother. Feed these poor people and give every one a piece of cloth". When Mathur hesitated fearing paucity of funds for the continuation of pilgrimage ".....Sri Ramakrishna was inexorable. He shed tears at the sight of such abject misery and said in anguish , 'Fie upon you! I am not going to Benaras. I prefer to remain with these people who are so helpless' and like a petulant child he left Mathur's company and sat with the poor villagers." (Life of Sri Ramakrishna Page 189). The word 'thankfulness' meant to Sri Ramakrishna 'gratitude, thankfulness towards God. He was very fond of the word 'thanks' in English and used to utter it many times during his conversation. The Master preferred to live a simple, almost bordering on 'poor' living style. It is said that once a rich Marwari devotee desired to give a lump-sum money to the Master for his personal expenses. Not only did he refused to take the money but even got angry; so the Marwari approached Holy Mother, consort of Sri Ramakrishna with his offering which was equally refused by her. It is said that once Narendra just to test his Master hid a rupee coin under the mattress when Sri Ramakrishna had gone to the Kali temple for evening puja. When the Master returned from the temple and sat on the cot he immediately got up feeling as if something had bitten him badly. Apologetically Narendra removed the coin from under the bed.

Insincerity and flippancy in talk and action find no place in the pursuit of spirituality. Sri Ramakrishna once chided Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the celebrated writer in Bengali for talking flippantly regarding the duty of man. Once when the Master asked him the above question Bankim had replied : 'Eating, sleeping and sex gratification', enraged at his impudence the Master had told him : 'What are you saying? You are very mean. What you think day and night and what you do all the time comes out through your lips. If a man eats radish, he belches radish' (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page 890). Similar things which happened to Sufi

masters are also narrated in the Book of Sufi Chivalry where Abu Baker Muhammad Jafar, Junayd said : "I travelled to the banks of the Euphrates for I had been told that a 'Fata' (Sadhu) lived there. I saw that the troubles of the whole world had gathered upon this noble man. I said: 'May Allah be pleased with you. Tell me, when does loyalty become perfect in this world?' The Fata said : "Junayd, the beginning of loyalty for you is not to ask this question." Naturally Junayd was hurt and then that Fata called him back and said : 'Loyalty without having lived loyally is not the kind of thing that good people do.' The saint must have read through Junyad's mind and the lesson for Junayd was : 'He is in grave error who takes into account the many good deeds that he has done and when he does not see a single offence in himself. If one does not follow Allah's orders in all sincerity, one is straying from the Truth!'

Sufism always assured that to those :"who are pure, He (God) offered His revelations and to the ones whom he loves, He (God) permitted the witnessing of His Divine Essence." Sri Ramakrishna describes his first vision of Divine mother in the following words :"....suddenly the blessed Mother revealed Herself. The buildings with their different parts, the temple and everything else vanished from my sight, leaving no trace whatsoever and in their stead I saw limitless, infinite, effulgent Ocean of Consciousness....." (Ibid. page 14) Further Sufism states: "Believe that the one who loves receives constancy, health and happiness from the Beloved." Similarly another Sufi Master has said:"For you (God)I have cried tears of blood. My tears became my cure."How similar is the statement made by Sri Ramakrishna when asked by a devotee :"Under what conditions does one see God' he said 'Cry to the Lord with an intensely yearning heart and you will certainly see HIM. People shed a whole jug of tears for wife and children. They swim in tears for money. But who weeps for God? Cry to Him with a real cry" (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page 83)

What if one is unable to follow the injunctions? Is there no way? Junayd encourages such people by saying :"All good is gathered in three conditions. If you cannot pass your days with what furthers you, atleast do not pass your days with what works against you. If you cannot befriend good people, atleast do not keep company with bad people. If you cannot give away what is yours for Allah's sake, atleast do not spend your future

on things that will anger HIM. Keep continuous repentance and doubt that your repentance is accepted." Since we have already said enough about repentance let us just know what another Sufi saint has said in a very cryptic manner that :"Three things constitute repentance : (a) regretting the past, (b) deciding absolutely to give up what one has done and (c) fearing one's sins, because one may know one's sins intimately but can never be sure that one is forgiven." We can easily add one more that is holding on to Truth under any circumstances this is another fundamental rule which is next to repentance.

One of the most talked about and discussed subject in the monastic life of any religion is 'Brotherhood'. About Sufi brotherhood, 'the Book of Sufi Chivalry' says :" (1) The Sufis do not reject those who come to their door, and do not pursue those who do not come; nor do they try to dominate the ones who enter their circles. Further it is said again very clearly that "a novice should not be rejected because of his faults nor a stranger accepted because of his good deeds." Another Sufi guru Abu Turab al-Nakshala has said very significantly that :"When someone makes an effort to attain good behaviour, takes on the outward form of the Sufis, and enters their circle, do not reject him, even if he commits one hundred faults. But do not let one who seeks the benefits of this world enter the circle without testing him, even if one hundred good deeds and benefits come from him." What a preponderate utterance this is and how very practical for any brotherhood.

Sri Ramakrishna himself was very choosy in selecting devotees it is said but his love was so deep and universal that he could seldom reject anybody once he/she had come to him with love and sincerity. He used to remark :"A devotee who can call on God while living a householder's life is a hero indeed. God thinks: 'He who has renounced the world for My sake will surely pray to Me. He must serve Me. Is there anything very remarkable about it?he is blessed indeed who prays to Me in the midst of wordly duties. He is trying to find Me, overcoming a great obstacle - pushing away, as it were, a huge black stone weighing a ton: such a man is a real hero!" (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 471)

Further Ya'qub Nahrajuri has remarked :"The sign that someone is well guided by Allah is that he is aware of his lack of sincerity, his heedlessness in his remembrance of God, his lack of loyalty and he is

dissatisfied with this state. His intentions and efforts show that his need for Allah is ever increasing, until the point where he gives up all desires.' Sri Ramakrishna also had to accommodate some such people. A kind of restricted but unstinted love could be said to be the hall-mark of Sri Ramakrishna's compassion. This is well illustrated in the love and affection the Master had for Girish Chandra Ghosh who 'was a born rebel against God, a skeptic, a Bohemian and a drunkard'. For a long time he had scant respect for Sri Ramakrishna but the latter's love turned him towards the Master and 'as time passed, Girish began to learn that the guru is the one who silently unfolds the disciple's life. He became a steadfast devotee of the Master.'

According to Abu Muhammad al-Jurayri : "Religion possesses ten treasures - Five outer and Five inner. The outer treasures are (1) to be truthful in your speech (Sri Ramakrishna used to say : 'Even those engaged in worldly activities, such as office work or business, should hold to the truth. Truthfulness alone is the spiritual discipline in the Kaliyuga' (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna page 177) (2) generous with your property, (3) humble in your appearance (How humble Sri Ramakrishna was is explained by Swami Saradananda in his book 'Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master' : "How humble he was, how meek how patient, how devoid of egoism - lowlier than the lowliest.... he could not at all put up with being addressed as a spiritual teacher, a father or a patriarch. He would burst out : 'God is the only spiritual teacher, father or a patriarch. I am the lowliest of the lowly, a servant of servants, equal to a hair on your body - a tiny hair at that, by no means a big one.' Page 437) (4) to avoid causing difficulty to others, (5) while bearing the difficulties caused by them." So also "The five inner treasures of religion are : (1) to fear separation from HIM (2) to wish to be with HIM (Sri Ramakrishna used to say :"My Mother! Who is my Mother ? Ah, she is the Mother of the universe..... A true son cannot live away from his mother") (3) to regret your wrong doings, (4) to have a conscience and (5) to feel shame before your Lord." In the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna as well as in the Hindu shastras great importance is given to these qualities.

The Sufis just like Sri Ramakrishna advocated that spiritual practices be conducted best in the mind or in a quiet corner or in a forest. Sufis also have a saying that solitude and isolation are preferable to

indiscriminate mixing with people. They said :"The castle of the being is isolation and the abandonment of the society of people, because if someone is not with you, he will be against you, the helpers are few and the times are cruel. Hurry before they destroy you through yourself!" Sri Ramakrishna once advised his disciples thus :"...let me tell you that the less people know of your spiritual life, the better it will be for you. Devotees endowed with Sattva meditate in a secluded corner or in a forest or withdraw into the mind...." (Ibid Page 292).

Another suggestion from the holy Sufi Masters is :"Be yourself, stay away from people, you will thus protect your religion and your happiness" Talking about how one should prepare for this spiritual life the saints said :"One will never attain the higher states if one does not make firm one's relationship with God at the beginning.... The duties that must be perfected in the early stages are obligatory prayers, reading of the assigned portions of the Koran in a state of purity, holding firm to the intermediaries (Sheikhs) and having a strong Will." Shastras also say that 'NITYAKARMAS' like Sandhyavandana, tending of the family fire etc. are mandatory. These are obligatory to the Hindus, specially in Sri Ramakrishna's teachings.

Another Sufi Futuwwah prescribes :"To forget what one already knows, to show patience against the wishes of one's ego, to give up expectations from ordinary people, not to want, not to expect thanks and rewards, to be generous, to hide one's status and to be modest." Those who are familiar with the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna will find him telling Hazra not to hate anybody : Mother of "Hazra used to hate people; Then something happened to her foot and gangrene set in. On account of the foul smell no one could enter her room, I told Hazra the incident and asked him not to hate anyone."

While most of the Sufi teachings tally and go along with those of the Master there are a few which are somewhat different. One amongst them was the view about the health of the physical body. The Sufis openly preached :"Seek good health, pray for it and be thankful for it. The real health is in Allah's forgiveness. Without his forgiveness, there is no health or well-being," and they also claimed that "The sages among men are those who are able to communicate health and well-being" Whereas Sri Ramakrishna was indifferent to health and said : this body is like : "...the

band of minstrels who suddenly appears, dances and sings and it departs on the same sudden manner. They come and they return, but none recognises them." While talking about the futility of mere physical body he said : "I see the body to be like a pumpkin with the seeds scooped out. Inside the body there is no trace of passion or worldly attachment. It is all very clean inside. It is the body that suffers. Once during his last days when he could not even eat anything and talk much due to the onslaught of cancer "Pundit Shashadhar paid a visit to the Master in Cossipore garden and said , 'Sir, the scripture says that saints like you can cure their physical illness by means of will-power alone. If you only concentrate your mind on the affected part, with the resolve that it be cured, you will be cured. Why don't you try it, Sir ?' The Master replied : "You are a scholar, and still you make this thoughtless proposal! This mind has been given up to God once for all. How can I withdraw it from HIM to turn it on this worthless body?" Such was his resignation to God, even in his agony." (Life of Sri Ramakrishna, page 483).

Both the Prophet and the Master were on the same wave-length regarding miserliness, for Prophet has said :"Is there a worse sickness than miserliness?" Sri Ramakrishna also did not like 'miserliness' - no, not at all. The Sufis also have the same Hindu attitude towards simple life without much want for they also taught :"Be content with little and accept your lot, so that you will not lower yourself in front of another."

Amongst the other common and cryptic Sufi teachings are: "There are also five faults from which one should cleanse oneself: hypocrisy, argument, affectation, artificiality and love of property and rank: and five curses from which one should free oneself are miserliness, ambition, anger, greed and gluttony." Like the vow given to the Brahmacharins in the Ramakrishna order, the Sufi rule also said : "When you begin a worthy task, complete the good deed and do not leave it half done" Swami Vivekananda, disciple of Sri Ramakrishna once said :"To work without motive, to work unattached, brings the highest bliss and freedom." Another similar vow is to treat with dignity and honour specially a person who does not have dignity. Sufis also believed that :"Whoever has self-respect shows respect to others and whoever does not have self-respect has no respect for others."

In general, the Sufis advised :"Listen to good discourses, participate in good conversation and abide by the prescribed behaviour upon the occasions. Having good manners means showing respect to those who are superior to you; loving friendship and agreement to those who are your equals, kindness and compassion to those who are lower than you; obedience and modesty to your mother and father and compassion in the education of the children. It means caring for your womenfolk; visiting and doing good deeds for relatives, loving your brothers and eliminating all and everything that may prevent you from loving them; offering good-hearted smiles and generosity toward all human kind; knowing the values of the Sufis and respecting their rights; not showing any need towards the rich; accepting the knowledge from men who know; humbly obeying men of wisdom without negation; and fleeing from the dogmatic ones, heretics, profiteers and men who wish to enslave others." Sri Ramakrishna's views are very similar to the above, specially regarding women for he has declared that :"...all women are the embodiments of Sakti. It is the Primal Power that has become women and appears to us in the form of women" The Master was one who desired that due respect be shown to ones parents for he told M, a disciple of his "....but keep your loving relationship with your father. Can't you prostrate yourself before him?"

Yahya Ibn Mudah, the Guru has said :"Three habits will ameliorate your character and your action :(1) Do not consider the rich as your enemies but look them upon as a lesson. (Swami Vivekananda used to say that "...the first of everything should go to the poor: we have only a right to what remains." (2) Do not regard the poor with arrogance, but look upon them with humbleness. (For Sri Ramakrishna the poor sprang from his perception of God in all created beings. His sentiment was not that of the humanist or philanthropist. To him the service of man was the same as the worship of God) (3) Do not gaze at women with lustful eyes but look upon them with compassion and kindness. (Sri Ramakrishna once told a devotee :'He who has realized God does not look upon a woman with the eye of lust; so he is not afraid of her. He perceives clearly that women are but so many aspects of the Divine Mother. He worships them all as the Mother Herself' (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, page 168)" How very simple and practical are these teachings of Sufism, almost similar to the sayings

and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna which being so straight and direct used to touch the very core of the hearts of his devotees.

However it does not mean that some of the Sufi teachings were not very strict and powerful occasionally like the dictum : "Consistency in this path (spiritual path) depends on the heart being in constant agreement with Allah and the spirit in constant battle with the body." And according to Sah ibn Abdullah : "Five things express the beauty of a being: (1) when the poor appear rich, (2) when the hungry appear satisfied, (3) when those with heavy hearts appear joyful, (4) when love is shown to an enemy and (5) when feebleness does not appear despite fasting the whole day and praying the whole night."

Mudah al Razi says :"The believer may be cheated out of his property, but never out of his religion. And while the religion of the hypocrite could easily be taken away from him, it is impossible to take away any of his property." What a wonderful statement it is!

Another Sufi Futuwwah is never "to forget your brothers in the path." Abu Muhammad al-Jurayri adds :"Loyalty to and consideration for others is a means to awaken consciousness from the sleep of heedlessness and to prevent thoughts from disasters of imagination." Further it is very clearly said : "In your relationship with people, do not bow in front of men for the benefits of this world and do not lower yourself by being condescending." To follow this dictum and keep the spirit so high is not very easy. On the other hand when just for the material benefit mostly many principles and ideals are compromised everywhere in the name of tactfulness, advantageous maneuverability and mutual understanding so on and so forth. It is also true that not only individuals or as a matter of fact even mighty organisations do get isolated, alienated and cut off from the mainstream of history - may be with the object to yield its present position to a much more opportunistic future. But this sacrificial attitude does not end in vain since it helps in an all round strengthening of everything ultimately. One can say that it sacrifices its cheap immediate goal to a long term purpose and achievement !

Commenting on the plight of one who comes seeking something Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan said :"The one who comes to you with a lowed head to ask for something, comes to you selling Allah's blessings bestowed upon him, and loses dignity for the sake of your power.

A Sufi poem can be quoted here in this context:

"To wear clothes torn in two pieces
and to be sent in hunger two nights and a day
Is better than to bow in need
That closes the eyes with shame
My family is numerous, my wealth next to nothing
I still live with God's direct sustenance
And do not sell my dignity by as King from others
My needs are between my Lord and myself
And no other than He will ever know."

Ofcourse, Sufis were not an Order of sannyasins in any manner but in their renunciation, God-love and sacrifice they were no less to anyone. Junayd once said :"A person's value is according to his intentions and aims. If someone's goal is worldly and the world, his value is nil" Sri Ramakrishna used to proclaim again and again that God alone is 'NUMBER ONE'. A row of zeros has no value unless it is preceded by a number. According to him this Number is God. Anything however big or valuable it may be, if placed or precedes God it will be useless - without any value like a zero preceding a number. In Master's divine mathematics, everything, every value was 'God only' and 'God first'.

Coming back to the Book of Sufi Chivalry :"He whose goal is the hereafter has a great value, as great as the paradise between the heavens and the worlds. The value of one whose sole purpose is Allah's pleasure, is Allah's pleasure on earth and in heaven. His value cannot be measured by any other means.....Allah's pleasure is greater than everything."

Distinguishing between aspiration and ego, Abu Ali al-Thaquafi explained: "Have noble aspirations, for it is aspiration, not ego that carries everything in this world. You have loaded on your heart things the body cannot bear. Your heart carries what the body cannot." Sri Ramakrishna used to give the example of "the railway engine which easily drags with it a train of heavily loaded carriages. So the loving children of God, firm in their faith and devotion, feel no trouble in passing through life inspite of all troubles and anxieties and at the same time they lead many to God along with them." (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, page 93). He also said that

aspirations for God-love or God-realisation is not to be considered as desire etc. Giving the example of sugar candy, he said : "Sugar candy cannot be classed with other sweets. Other sweets are injurious to the health, but not sugar candy." No doubt sugar-candy is not only non-injurious to health but tastes sweet from whichever side one may lick!"

Since Sufism gives lot of importance to 'brotherhood', no harm will be done if we linger a little longer on the subject. Their attitude towards 'brotherhood' is to be highly commended, for it is said : "Relations between brethren must be such that when they see each other their hearts should fill with joy." Ismail ibn Abu Umayyah says : "It should be easy to go and see friends among the brethren and should not hesitate to do so. Be wise, see how important it is, and consider it a blessing and a gift." Another Master Ibn Mubarak has said : "To see one's brethren strengthens one's faith, and is a cure for illness."

Sufan al Thadri has declared that he: "...had no pleasure left in this world except to be with friends and brethren." This kind of a close knit brotherhood exists in the Ramakrishna Order from the days of the direct disciple of the Master with Swami Vivekananda as their guide and leader. It is said that a feeling of deep brotherhood blossomed in the heart of the group of youngmen who attended on Sri Ramakrishna during his fatal illness and after his demise found that the Master though physically absent was present in spirit. These young men represented as it were the collective aspect of the Master. As such there was lot of coming and going amongst these 'brother monks'. It is said that once when Swami Vivekananda was travelling along with another brother monk, the latter fell ill in the Himalayas. Swamiji not only looked after his brother monk with much love and care but carried the belongings including the pair of shoes of his friend on his head!

Plenty of such instances are mentioned in the Ramakrishna literature regarding the love and warmth that bound these brothers in the ochre cloth. The love and concern these 'brothers' had for each other is well illustrated by the words of a very elderly Swamiji of the Dandi Ashrama when he said that he often witnessed sannyasins belonging to the same Order and travelling together leaving behind their companions when they fell sick and proceeding in their travel with the sole purpose of completing their pilgrimage, whereas the monks of the Ramakrishna Order not only

attended to their sick companions but also those who did not belong to their Order and did not hesitate to cancel their own pilgrimage for the sake of their 'brothers' or even outsiders most willingly and without any grudge.

The Sufi books state that :"Among brethren, all should do good deeds for each other without being asked." and "to really help is to help without being asked. Even if you gave all you possessed to someone who came begging for something and was unsure whether you would give it or not, all that you could give him would never equal what he had lost." Talking in a general tone al-Fadi ibn al-Rahi says :"Consider it a happy occasion when you are able to provide help to someone in need because you do not know what the next moment will bring : destinies may change and life may be short that you may not complete an act or see a joy mature." What an ecstatic mood he must have been when this person uttered these words! The Book of Sufis seeks you to :"...show graciousness to the needy" but at the same time warns you to :"shy away from the rich and powerful. But when the rich and noble guests do come to his house, he would serve them with shyness."

Then about the five virtues, the Book of Sufi Chivalry says : "Keep safe what has been lent to you: protect and preserve the good in your self, be truthful and honest, be patient, pure and selfless towards your brothers, and seek the salvation of your soul. Who loses one of these virtues loses his aim." Sri Ramakrishna used to say again and again that God realisation must be the aim of every human being. Brotherhood is again emphasized in a different way as connected deeply with one's own salvation - quite a novel view point which is not found in any other faith. So also the quality of 'patience' of the mind is to be preserved and it is advised that :"Be patient amid the greatest trouble, kindly to the ignorant (which is also another name for patience) and be generous so as to educate the miser." Not only the Sufis but Sri Ramakrishna also referred often to miserliness and miser but he twisted the whole notion in a positive way by saying that the love of a devotee must be as intense and possessive to God as that of the miser to his wealth and earthly attachments.

Poise is another quality of the mind which has to be maintained under all circumstances and different situations and like in Gita, the Sufis too have said :"Such a spiritual seeker seeks no praise for doing good and

does not stop doing what he believes to be good out of fear of criticism. Gita also advocated such an equilibrium under all conditions - admiration or slander. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna : "He who is unattached everywhere, who is not delighted at receiving good nor dejected at coming by evil, is poised in wisdom." (Gita, chap. 2, Sloka 57).

Another Sufi Master has said very appropriately :"Futuwwah is considering other people's actions with tolerance while regarding your own with dissatisfaction; respecting the rights of those who are superior, inferior or equal to you."

The Sufis believed that compassion must be the basis of all Futuwwahs relationship and their Master Junayd explained thus : "Give them what they want, do not ask them to do something that is beyond their capacity and do not tell them things that they will not understand." Gita also tells :"Seek to perform your duty: but lay not claim to its fruits. Be you not the producer of the fruits of karma; neither shall you lean towards inaction." (GITA Chap.2, Sloka 47) Sri Ramakrishna used to say "Perform your duties in unselfish spirit. Always try to perform your duties without desiring any result" Swami Vivekananda also laid great stress on aspect of 'giving'. In one of his poems 'GIVE' he entreats to 'give' and do not seek any return, such a 'giving' however small becomes very great - like the ocean which is nothing but collection of drops of water. According to him, it is not the same as charity or philanthropy, it is compassion. He further suggested that an ideal religious teacher should come down to the level of the taught.

Futuwwah therefore ultimately is moral/conduct/how to pilot oneself through this world. It is just like protecting every limb of our body and inner being from committing sin. "Futuwwah determines the right use of eye, the heart, the tongue and the desires. Futuwwah says - we must be patient with the way Allah has organised our lives and the highest form of Futuwwah is when nothing occupies 'you' but Allah. Is it not like the Jivatma being completely taken over by Parmatma?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With the publication of this VI Series just now, we have atlast managed to cover a major portion of the Comparative Study of Sufism and the Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and some of the views of his disciple Swami Vivekananda here and there. This we have been able to achieve due to the encouragement and co-operation extended to us by all concerned. Ofcourse the task has not been that easy because of the financial crunch, prices skyrocketing and occasional discouragement, complaints and (sometimes) the not very friendly attitude of a section of the readers who were opposed to our line of thought in giving due importance to Islamic Sufism along with the apostle of Sanatana Hindu Dharma - Sri Ramakrishna. There was also the grouse of the language being too subtle and as such being difficult to understand. Some also questioned the necessity of yet another publication dealing with the subject when enough books were available in the book-market on the same. Objections were raised against the so-called pedantic treatment of the subject!

Anyway our thanks are due to all, all those who helped us in the printing and publishing of the series, reading them and also honestly airing their own views, unreservedly.

Also, we are deeply beholden to all our monastic brothers specially to Rev. Swami Swahanandaji of Hollywood, Rev. Swami Tathagatanandaji of New York and Rev. Swami Ganganandaji of Gretz (France) besides the following friends who helped us in every way in the preparation, printing and bearing of the production of the entire series :

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We are hopeful that with such encouragement and co-operation that we have received so far, we will be able to bring out the remaining VII and VIII series also by the end of this year or early 1993 - God willing!

Kindly allow us to conclude then, that may this idea of good-will, co-operation and enthusiasm continue to enable us proceed further in this venture towards the fulfillment of an universal outlook, religious harmony and brotherhood amongst the mankind.

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